

THE UK'S BEST SELLING TATTOO MAGAZINE

Kiss Deep

40

THREATS

Free Inside

40 GREAT CHESTPIECES

THIS MONTH...

WE BRING YOU THE TESTIMONY OF THE ONE AND ONLY **MIKE MOSES**. WE THEN HUNG OUT WITH **NY INK** FLOOR MANAGER **ROBEAR**, **NINA KATE** (NOT AT THE SAME TIME) AND WERE TRULY STUNNED AT THE GROUND-BREAKING ART OF **JESSA HUEBING-REITINGER**. WE ALSO HAVE **MEMENTO MORI** SKULLS.

MEANWHILE, FUTURE OLYMPIC LEGEND **JAMES ELLINGTON** MAKES AN APPEARANCE, AS DOES THE TATTOOED TOYMAKER **FRANK KOZIK**.

WHICH LEFT US ENOUGH TIME TO CHECK OUT THE **SYNDEY EXPO**, **BUDAPEST & LEIPZIG**.



KISS AND MAKE UP

ISSUE 211
JUNE 2012 - £4.25



COVER: PH. SCOTT COLE • MODEL: NANCY HADY • MAKEUP: ALICE BIZABRE

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The needle has landed



📷 The J

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

This week, I received an email from a publicity company looking for some press for a music artist they had picked up – presumably this has come in off the back of the Lemmy interview we ran a couple of issues back. This music artist happened to be a tattooed rapper. I must confess, I didn't read the entire biography, but he looked to be about 17 or so – 20 at the most I would say.

I watched the video clip they had included – and, to be fair to myself here – from start to finish. Twice. Once out of respect for them having contacted me professionally and a second time to make sure it was as bad as I thought it was the first time.

It's become pretty easy to go and get yourself heavily tattooed these days. It doesn't carry the meaning it once used to – and that's OK. Really it is – the world keeps turning and everything in it changes all the time. That's what the world does. When Motley Crue came out swinging covered in ink,

they were different times – it was a real talking point. Now, even the security dude in my local Tesco has two full sleeves and it's no big deal. What I'm saying here is, just getting a ton of ink doesn't make you 'inked' in a way that makes everybody want to hear your story – there has to be more to it than that. With some people trying to use it as leverage into fame

and fortune, I swear I would be more interested if they coloured themselves in with felt-tips.

Anyway, this wasn't even sophisticated rap. Eminem it was not (man, I could make a meal out of that interview), more like my kids kicking about in the garage on a Saturday afternoon to be frank, but a class act?

I'm not stupid and neither are you readers; I know artists can make world-changing music at a crazily young age. But this

particular 'artist' got to me more than most, because it was obvious somebody had thrown money at it to make it happen. There appeared to be a mass of encouragement for very little talent. Backing up a project with cash and not hard work is not the best way to secure a future for yourself in a world that will chew you up and spit you out faster than an old Hubba

SOMEBODY HAS TO STAND UP AND TELL THE EMPEROR HE ISN'T WEARING ANY CLOTHES. TATTOOS YES, CLOTHES, NO, AND THAT'S WHERE YOU HAVE TO DRAW THE LINE

Bubba you found under the seat in your car.

I do however, wish to take this public opportunity to apologise for my shoddy response to said company, in which I politely gave my editorial reasons for not taking up their kind offer of an interview. When I had finished my email, I found there was a devil sitting on my shoulder that forced me to conclude: 'It looks like some kid in a big hat pointing at this dick a lot. Maybe he should go and watch

some old clips of Van Halen.'

It was rude of me. Rude... and justified.

Somewhere in my despondent heart that loves what's left of music, I know I will no doubt see said artist sitting on top of the charts before the end of the month, but somebody has to stand up and tell the Emperor he isn't wearing any clothes.

Tattoos yes, clothes, no – and that's where you have to draw the line.

Sen



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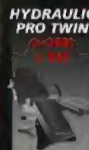


RETRACTABLE WHEELS



FACE CRADLE

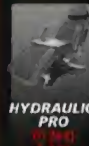
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370-S MOBILE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
370-S ELITE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

COMES STANDARD ON ALL 2011 MODELS

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

06 SLEEVE NOTES
People on the move, companies giving stuff away... you know the drill.

09 CALL OF THE WILD
'Outside' really does exist. Here's a few things you could do!

08-12 CONVENTION LISTINGS
If you're feeling really adventurous, here's the rest of them!

10 WALK THIS WAY
This month, a little fantastical digital manipulation for you.

12 PAUL SWEENEY
The continuing saga of The Sweeney against the world...

15 FIRST BLOOD
The third part in our limited series of advice for absolute beginners.



09 AN EYE IS UPON YOU
Always in the kitchen at parties? Rewind. Rethink.

THE BIG STUFF

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Smart, sassy, often seen in latex. No, not our magazine designers but the one and only Nina Kate.

24 ROAD TRIP EAST OF EDEN
Touring Europe in a van made by your old man and your brothers? Brilliant. You couldn't make this stuff up.

28 LET THE DEAD SPEAK
The skull has had, and always will have a permanent place in tattoo culture - but you've never seen it like this before...

34 CELEBRITY SKIN ROBEAR
Last issue, Ami James. This issue, the man who could be said to really run the show - RoBear!

66 CELEBRITY SKIN JAMES ELLINGTON
One of our great Olympic hopes for the coming months... with a nice line in tattoos as well. Bonus!

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40 OF THE VERY BEST CHESTPIECES FOR YOUR PERUSAL.

02 ART PROFILE FRANK KOZIK
Who can deny a tattooed toymaker? Sounds like a fiendish fairy story to me.

92 ROAD TRIP SYDNEY TATTOO & BODY ART EXPO
Is it that time of year again already? Apparently so...

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Sleeve Notes

twitter.com/skindeepmag www.facebook.com/tattoomagazine

ALL SUBMISSIONS TO SLEEVE NOTES GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. BE IT NEWS, AN EVENT, NEW MERCH, A STUDIO MOVE... WE'LL DO OUR VERY BEST TO LET EVERYBODY ELSE KNOW ABOUT IT TOO. EMAIL: EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK OR IF YOU WANT TO BE ARCHAIC ABOUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR: SKIN DEEP, THE OLD SCHOOL, HIGHER KINNERTON, CHESTER CH4 9AJ. BRING IT.



RIBCAGE GIVEAWAY

Well, we're still on a roll with finding great stuff to give you for free. This issue, we've hooked up with Ribcage, a UK-based indie streetwear label, who have some truly inspired designs on their racks. To be in with a shot at walking away with one of these 100 percent cotton killer designs, send an email with the subject 'RIBCAGE' to editor@skindeep.co.uk, and we'll pull five girls and five guys out of the hat to walk away looking brushed up and sexy. If you're one of those people who never wins anything and can't even be bothered entering, get your credit card out and pay Ribcage a visit online at ribcagecustoms.com.

SHORT SLEEVES

MOVERS & SHAKERS

That young rascal, Mil Martinez, who likes to run with bold, clean electric tattooing from the roots of the old school traditional style, can now be found at 13 Diamonds – 02074 370032 or email info@13diamonds.com.

Tracy D is also on the move. By the time you read this, she will have left Haunted Tattoo to take up her new spot at Kings Cross Tattoo Studio – and we wish our good friend the best of luck!



Inspirations Tattoo Studio in Leeds have now closed its premises at Hyde Park. Mitch Allenden is still with them and is now working from the Morley studio alongside fellow artists, Rich Wells and Matt Hart. You can find them through Facebook or at this address: 1st floor offices, Ackroyd Street, Morley, Leeds, LS27 8PZ. Tel: 01132 525111. Email: tatt2@hotmail.co.uk. Website: www.inspirationstattoos.co.uk.

GUEST SPOTS

Hell to Pay is proud to announce that Sweet Laraine will be guesting in their studio on April 24-25, 2012. For an appointment please send a message to laraine@sweetlaraine.com.

Some upcoming guest artists at Northern Soul Tattoo, Liverpool: Brenda M Kelly from BMK Tattoo Dublin will be at Northern Soul Tattoo 22-26 May; Lee Clements From Chameleon Tattoos will be at Northern Soul Tattoo 19-21 April; Patrick McFarlane will be at Northern Soul Tattoo from 4-7 April. More to be announced soon.

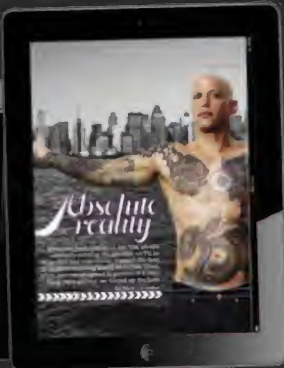
NEW STUDIOS

Lost Medusa Tattoo Studio is Darren Wright's newly opened tattoo studio in Tipton, West Midlands. Specialising in portraits and creative realism, to see his work and for appointment bookings, please visit www.darrenwrighttattoos.com.

THE SKIN DEEP DIGITAL APP

It's been a long time in the making, but now it's here. It doesn't get much better than this! Completely redesigned for iPad, this beautiful piece of work (designed in-house by our regular guys with the assistance of a particularly sharp stick) is available right now – simply search the **apple newsstand** and you'll find it soon enough. The app itself is free while the magazine clocks in at a cool **£2.99** – which is where our overseas readers will jump for joy. That means it's available to read on the same day as it is in the UK, and for a fraction of the price of normal exports. And all from the comfort of wherever you happen to be sitting.

While you're busy checking that out, we'll be busy pushing it in different directions over the coming months to see what we can really do with it. Stay tuned for details...



RANDOM READER

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Our old friend, Lee Garland, took this shot as part of a set with the model, Bex Fisher. Thinking we might like them (which we do), he asked for a gratuitous pimp of his website – www.leegarland.co.uk – on the off-chance he could tempt a few other like-minded minxes in his direction. Our work here is done, and the pleasure is all ours...

SHORT SLEEVES

LATE VACANCIES

A position has become available for a full-time tattooist at INKERS, an award-winning shop in Chertsey. Only serious experienced people need apply. Please contact Jules on 07904 609575 or orrichards611@btinternet.com.

Distinkt Tattoos are seeking a professional piercer for their studio in Swindon town centre. Studio experience is ideal and a strong customer service and friendly attitude is a must. For more info, contact Neil on 01793 977151 or email info@distinktattoos.co.uk.

... AND FINALLY

Phil Bissett of Artmaster Tattooing, London is celebrating his 20th anniversary in the studio on 20 April. 20 years in the same place is always worth a mention and a drink when your paths cross...



ON YOUR BIKE

Our old friend Terry Bradley – he of the beautiful paint jobs – has teamed up with Harley-Davidson to launch 'The Art Of Custom' design competition that will search for inspirational new art to appear on bespoke Harley-Davidson fuel tanks. "This is an opportunity for artists and designers to really express themselves. I'm looking to see designs that will really showcase the inspiration of the artist."

The competition is an amazing opportunity to get yourself on the map, but the closing date of April 30 is upon us, so get on over to www.harley-davidson.com/tankwall to make yourself known to the world.

Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

DOMESTIC SHOWS

May 12-13

PLYMOUTH TATTOO CONVENTION

Guildhall, Plymouth
Devon, England
www.plymouthtattooconvention.co.uk

May 12-13

TITANIC INK

St Mary's Football Stadium
Southampton
Hampshire, England
www.titanic-ink.co.uk

May 19-20

NORTHAMPTON INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

Saints Rugby Ground
Weedon Road
Northampton, NN5 5BG
www.northamptoninternationaltattooconvention.com
Nigel Barden, Suns & Roses Tattoos
01604 949958

May 26-27

BOURNEMOUTH TATTOO CONVENTION

Bournemouth International Convention Centre
Exeter Road, Bournemouth
Dorset, England
www.bournemouthtattooconvention.com

June 9-10

MK TATTOO CONVENTION

Milton Keynes, England
www.mktattooconvention.co.uk

June 9-10

PERTH TATTOOWAR

Salutation Hotel, Perth

June 9-10

READING TATTOO SHOW

Rivermead Leisure Complex
Reading, Berkshire, England
www.readingtattooshow.co.uk
01189 590700
readingtattooshow@hotmail.co.uk

June 23-24

INK FOR HEROES

York Racecourse
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June 29 - July 2

INKFEST - A FESTIVAL OF TATTOO ART & ALTERNATIVE MUSIC

Woolacombe Bay Holiday Park
Woolacombe, Devon, England
www.inkfest.co.uk

LIFE IN THE DARK LANE

Those crazy dudes who lean towards the horned one with the pointy tail, Ave Satanas, will be trading their new wares all around the country this year, including sponsorship at the Great British Tattoo Show and the Metal Hammer Golden Gods Awards in June. Check out their new stock at ave-satanas.com. Anton LaVey would be proud.



MOOMOONZ GIVEAWAY

Whether you're a hipster, quipster or a quadraphonic trickster, we've got something groovy for you here. Yeah, we borrowed the phrase from a song and don't actually know what it means either, but that's OK; it's called unique styling and that's what's going on here. If you're liking what you see, we've got some in a box to hand out to some lucky readers. Just send an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line of 'MooMoonZ' and we'll do the rest. Meantime, check out their full range of goodies here: moomoonz.co.uk



HIT THE ROAD JACK

THE CALL OF THE WILD



INK FOR HEROES JUNE 23-24, 2012

YEAH! INK FOR HEROES! WHATCHA GOT FOR US THIS YEAR?

Lots! Though even if there was nobody there and no venue, you should still buy a ticket for the cause. Get your ass over to inkforheroes.co.uk and check out the artist list – there's a whole stack of talent coming out in support. When you get there, make some time to spend at the portrait seminar with Remis... you WILL learn something new!

WILL 'THEY' BE THERE AGAIN THIS YEAR?

If you're talking the Cupcake Club – as I know you are – damn right they will. This is pretty much home territory for them. Get your money out, lay it on the table and add some more pounds sterling to the big pile for a brilliant cause.

OK. I'M THERE.

Good. So are we. No talking. Just being there.



MILTON KEYNES TATTOO CONVENTION JUNE 9-10, 2012

THAT'S PRESUMABLY IN MILTON KEYNES, YEAH?

Sure is, at Kents Hill Park. This is their second year and it's looking good my friend.

WHAT'S COOKING?

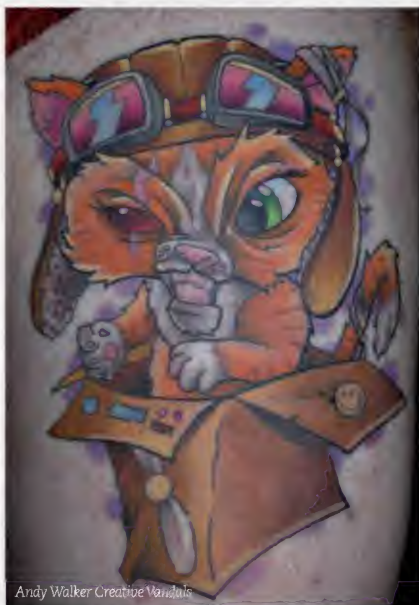
Mat and Andy from Creative Vandals, Southmead, Physical Graffiti to name but a few – get over to mktattooconvention.com for the full artist list.

WHAT ELSE YOU GOT FOR US?

Well the hog roast is sounding pretty freaking hot right now – and as we all know, there's nothing better after a hog roast than having your tarot cards read. Throw in a snake lady, some angle grinding and some tip-top bands, and ladies and gents, we have ourselves a rock 'n' roll pawty tonight...

ARE YOU OK?

Yep. Just got a little bit over-excited for a moment.



READING TATTOO CONVENTION JUNE 9-10, 2012

WHAT GIVES HERE THEN?

Well, this is their third year on the tracks and you can find them at the Rivermead Leisure Complex. To get in on the action, readingtattooshow.co.uk is the place to go.

... AND HOW'S THE ARTIST LIST SHAPING UP?

Pretty damn good – Dr Evil, Element Tattoo Studio Texas, Cameron Randall and Brazilian George, Torture Garden, Rio Di Janeiro... keep checking back on the website for more news as we get closer.

HIT ME WITH SOME STRANGE FACTS!

Well, if the Gods are willing, you can have lunch by the river! That's pretty cool, but if you're feeling a bit more adventurous than that, I suppose stilt walkers, pole dancers and fire eaters might rattle your cage some.



Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

June 30 - July 1

BELFAST YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Hilton Belfast hotel
4 Lanyon Place
Belfast, BT1 3LP
United Kingdom
www.belfastyearofthedragon.com

July 7-8

DARE VALLEY INK 'N' IRON

Michael Sobell Sports Centre
Aberdare, South Wales
www.darevalleyinkniron.co.uk

July 28-29

PORTSMOUTH TATTOO CONVENTION

Portsmouth Guildhall
Portsmouth, England
www.portsmouthtattooconvention.com

August 4-5

MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL TATTOO SHOW

Manchester Central
Tel: 01244 663400
www.manchestertattooshow.com

August 12

SOMERSET TAT2 CONVENTION

Bridgwater Sports & Social Club
Bridgwater, Somerset
Tel: 01278 439569

August 18-19

NORWICH BODYART FESTIVAL

St Andrews Hall, Norwich
Norfolk, England
www.norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk

August 24-26

MAIDEN CITY INK TATTOO CONVENTION

St Columb's Hall
Orchard Street
Derry City
Northern Ireland
Tel: Zac at Skin Art Tattoo, 02871 363076
maidencityink@aol.com

September 28-30

LONDON TATTOO CONVENTION

Tobacco Dock
Porters Walk, London, E1W 2SF
www.thelondontattooconvention.com

October 12-14

TATTOO JAM

Doncaster Racecourse
www.tattoojam.com
01244 663400

WALK THIS WAY

WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD

There must a million sites on the web that like to shovel digital art in your general direction – and then we came across this one...



Prompted by a confused twitter feed from rather a lot of people who didn't know if this (the group shot) was real or not (though to be honest, all you had to do was type in the web address on the picture itself to find out), we discovered the mighty worth1000.com.

Pitching itself as the 'top creative contest site in the world', they're not bluffing! Every single page is loaded with regular guys 'n' gals – pros and amateurs alike – submitting some of the greatest digital art to ever to grace the web.

Whether you're looking for some inspiration for a new tattoo, an artist (tattoo or otherwise) looking to get involved in something new, or are just out to waste some time when you should be working at your desk, there are pages and pages of top-end



pixelated mayhem to get excited about.

Seriously, if you can't pull some crazy but brilliant ideas from [worth1000](http://worth1000.com) to take to your tattoo artist and crank up something that was looking pretty normal beforehand, you're in the wrong game. (Note: by 'pull some crazy ideas' we mean 'use for inspiration' not 'rip it off in its entirety')

If you do so happen to venture down this road with a new tattoo idea... we'd love to see the results. You know where we are.

SEE ALL INTERNATIONAL SHOWS ON NEXT PAGE

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Ergrife Palace Hotel, Via Aurelia 619, Roma, Italy
www.tattooexporoma.com

May 4-6

COPENHAGEN INK FESTIVAL

Tap 1, NY Carlsberg VEJ 91, 1738
 Copenhagen, Denmark
www.inkfest.dk

May 19-20

INTERNATIONAL NEEDLE ART CONVENTION

Bress Sportcenter, Breda, The Netherlands
www.needle-art.nl

May 19-20

ALCHEMY TATTOO EXPO

Salle Polyvalente, 1964 Conthey, Switzerland
www.alchemy-tattoo-expo.ch

May 26-27

SUMMER INK FEST

Genk, Belgium
www.summerinkfest.be
info@summerinkfest.be

June 1-3

AMSTERDAM TATTOO CONVENTION

RAI Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands
www.tattooexpo.eu

June 2-3

KRAKOW TATTOOFEST

Klimeckiego 14, Krakow, Poland
www.tattoofest.pl

June 15-17

12TH VALENCIA TATTOO CONVENTION

Expo Hotel, Valencia
www.valenciattattooconvention.com
www.spaintattooconventions.com

June 22-24

TRANSILVANIA TATTOO EXPO

Sibiu, Romania
www.tattooexpo.ro

August 3-5

STARFIRE TATTOO WEEKEND

Polysdorf, Austria
www.starfire-tattoo.com

September 7-9

6TH CASTELLON TATTOO CONVENTION

Recinto La Pergola, Paseo Ribalta
www.castellontattooconvention.com
www.spaintattooconventions.com

September 13-16

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PAUL SWEENEY



HOT IN THE CITY

Yep, that's right, I'm up to my old tricks again, using catchy pop titles to lure you into what will inevitably become another random stream of consciousness, pulled from the depths of obscurity, loosely held together like the first ever Guns 'n' Roses patch sewn on to a sleeveless denim jacket without the assistance of a fully qualified Mum

I thought it would be quite fitting to quote the Billy Idol song 'Hot in the City' for the title of this month's article, as it is... "Hot in

the city, hot in the city to-night, to-night!" EVERYBODY!

"Hot in the city, hot in the city to-night, to-night!"

Alright, that's enough of that. I'm in danger of turning this column into a karaoke competition, or more specifically, a 'Billy Idol-Idol' (sorry, bad pop pun, but I couldn't resist). It's not just hot in the city tonight, it's been pretty blood boiling in the city in the daytime too. We have the all too obvious arrival of British summer time to thank for that; what we may have lost in an hours sleep, we've truly gained in an excess of over-exposed, sun-spanked flesh all over our previously sparsely populated parkland; "Move over you Goths, your time to revel in winter's early darkness has passed!" The parks

now belong to extreme weekend tanners with their straw hats, Frisbees and disposable barbeques, all desperately trying to introduce the same golden brown onto their otherwise blank canvases. Our eyes masked by the tinted glass of a brand new pair of imitation

Ray-Bans (over £100 is too much to spend on an inanimate object that will eventually be lost on the beach, or fall onto the train

tracks after sliding from your head as you drunkenly attempt to remove chewing gum from between your toes because you thought it would be a good idea to wear flip-flops into town), but unfortunately the same cannot be said for our ears, as the wound down windows of passing cars expose innocent bystanders to the questionable tastes in music of the average driving licensed sun worshipper.

If only there was a easier way for them to introduce vibrant colours onto their body and also express themselves, without immediately offending everyone around them...

"Why would you want a suntan? Everyone's got one. It doesn't make you any different from anyone else"... sound

familiar? I can't think of the amount of times I've heard this as an argument against having a tattoo.

I'm pretty sure tattoos don't give you skin cancer. So why not give yourself an excuse to slap on the factor 50 this summer and get one.



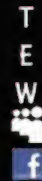
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THE BIG SHOW

You might think that getting tattooed at a convention is one of the most natural things in the world, but it's worth putting some thought into it before you decide that's what you want to do. Here's a quick rundown of reasons loaded with some food for thought alongside to make sure what you're doing is right for you.

The best reason is access to artists that would otherwise cost you a small fortune to visit. Given the choice of conventions these days, it's likely that you'll be able to figure out your dream scenario by checking out both local and international shows – we're big fans of this obviously, but likewise, if you can afford it, nothing can replace the adventure of travelling to a far

away place and getting ink in the studio of your chosen one.

Do you mind dozens of people stopping by to see what's going on? Most don't. Some do. That's an individual thing but if it's your first tattoo, you might fare better in a private studio. Looking at the bigger picture, a convention is the very place to check people out and discuss that very arrangement with

artist beforehand – that way, you won't be disappointed in having to wait and your artist will have some prior knowledge of what is expected. Having said that, some artists are totally up for the challenge and excel at working on the spur of the moment. What we're saying here is simply that you should think about what you want before you show up.



Pixie, Triplesix Studios, Sunderland

GIVEN THE CHOICE OF CONVENTIONS THESE DAYS, IT'S LIKELY THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT YOUR DREAM SCENARIO BY CHECKING OUT BOTH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL SHOWS

your favoured artist.

Take a moment to think about privacy. Are you one of those people who will be getting a custom piece done and would like to keep it private? Believe it or not, we do exist in the world. If so, then a private sitting is definitely what you should be thinking about. On the other hand, if it's so unbelievably brilliant you want to show everybody in the whole world and have it talked about until the end of time, a convention is just perfect. Be aware that people will take pictures of you pulling strange faces while your body is pulled in directions you perhaps didn't know existed.

The best way to go decide on a tattoo at a show is to at least discuss it a little bit with your

Don't think that if you're underage you will get away with it at a show any more so than you would in a studio. If anything, it will be policed even more and every tattoo artist working a convention will be well aware of this.

Finally – if you have booked a slot – you need to have the decency and courtesy to turn up, or at least let your artist know if plans have changed. Contrary to popular opinion, nobody is caning in so much money that they can afford to sit around and wait for you all day. Conventions are not free to work and there is always somebody willing to jump in your slot. If you really can't make it, just say so and then everybody knows where they stand. 🌸

THE ITCH YOU CAN'T SCRATCH

If there's one single thing that we get more mail about than anything else, it's 'scratchers'.

In the spirit of education, a scratcher is a person who (more often than not) has procured themselves the equipment needed to tattoo, and proceeds to do so without any official training. It may sound like fun, tattooing your mate in your kitchen, but it's riddled with more hazards than you can possibly imagine.

Thinking about it logically,

watched enough tattoos being inked to figure it out for yourself. One of your friends might want a tribal band and you both figure it sounds simple enough to do it right here, right now. So you do and a few hours later, the deal is done. You can call yourself a tattooer. Next time, maybe you'll throw a bit of a party and tattoo a whole bunch of people all at the same time now. Maybe even make yourself some cash.

From these humble beginnings,

HOW IS THIS PERSON REALLY ANY DIFFERENT FROM, SAY, YOUR MA OR SOME GUY THAT WORKS IN STARBUCKS IN THE DAY – WHO COULD GO OUT AND DO EXACTLY THE SAME THING?

there are doubtless many reasons why somebody would go down this road. Maybe they are – or think they are – 'pretty good' at art. Maybe they've been inspired by somebody they know or a TV show. All are valid reasons to want to become a tattooist, but it's simply not the way to go about it. Apprenticeships are notoriously hard to come by these days, so it's difficult to break into this crazy world, but nobody is going to pick up a guitar and write even an average song the very first time around. Why would they think they can progress quickly with a tattoo machine?

Let's put this in black and white for those of you that have gone down this road. You've bought a kit from ebay, read enough articles on the internet and


how is this person really any different from, say, your Ma or some guy that works in Starbucks during the day – who could go out and do exactly the same thing? Would either of those two people know about potential disease and aftercare? Would you look at them with amazement and tell them the work they had done was brilliant? Or would you look at them like they were some kind of crazy fool who didn't have a clue? Because that's how tattooists who came up the hard way will look at you. No respect, no brains and no chance. It's a hard world for a reason sometimes.

We've seen it all here – from badly infected 'tattoos' that have needed to be treated in hospital to some of the worst 'art' you can possibly imagine. Sometimes, both

of these go hand in hand. When it comes to tattoo, letting somebody untrained and inexperienced loose on your body ranks up there highly with some of the worst ideas you can ever have. Rather like letting a six year old fix your car, you'll get what you pay for.

If you're one of them and your heart is really in this and you're totally committed to wanting to tattoo, as usual all things come at a price. If you live in Town X, what makes you think the answer will lie there? The world is a big place. You'd go to Town Y and Z to pick up a new car or see a band, so why would you want to confine

the most important thing in your life to a 30-mile radius? If you want this as bad as you think, then you're going to have to be prepared to get uncomfortable for a while. Go back in time and read the interview with Jeff Gogue in issue 206 – you'll see that the road you need to be on might mean living in your car, getting knocked back repeatedly and bringing yourself to the edge of madness, but by the time you're done with this adventure not only will you be well on your way to being the best you can possibly be, you'll also have some stories to tell.

Which is where we come in... 



This is a prime example of the kind of tattoo you can have if you think hard and aren't stupid about what you get put onto your skin.
Tattoo by: David Corden, Ritual Art, Rainham, Kent

NEXT ISSUE WE LOOK AT

THE PAIN THRESHOLD AND PUBLIC INK

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the Fetishist

On a sunny day in late March, I had the pleasure of chatting with Nina Kate. As we were talking, she was working on a pair of leggings for a hair show she had coming up at the weekend in Manchester. No stranger to fashion, Nina is also the founder of Jane Doe Latex, and most recently its offshoot, Jane Doe Apparel...

“Jane Doe Apparel is a new line of unisex street wear. We make T-shirts, jeans, vests, all kinds of stuff. They’re things you can wear every day. For some people the latex is obviously quite extreme, and although people like the idea of it, they don’t necessarily want to spend that much money, so Jane Doe Apparel is a clothing line that is affordable and people can wear it just right out of their house.”

Nina works out of her home in north London, an area that is particularly middle-class, filled with actors and artisans. It is a far cry from Whitechapel where she first lived as an adult in London, a place where she experienced a couple of muggings. “It was fun,” she says, almost sarcastically but then adds, “I mean, it obviously had its dangers, but it was alright.” Nina was brought up in Camden but then moved to Cambridge (“a place that has enough going on to not be considered a backwater”) at the age of 14 as it was a more affordable place for her family to live, and their house in Camden was falling apart. Returning to London at 18 she began to become more involved in the fashion scene, particularly latex.

“At that time I was working for quite a lot of different people, but I thought in the end that it was rubbish so decided to do it on my own. It’s been seven years now that I’ve been working on Jane Doe Latex. I started small, rather than take out a huge bank loan. I just did whatever I could and grew it that way, and it’s become successful. It would be great to have a shop, but it wouldn’t be feasible in a place like London.”

The fetish club scene, explained



Ayesha H

YOU SEE ALL THESE TEENAGERS GETTING THEIR HANDS AND NECKS TATTOOED AND YOU THINK ‘OH MY GOD, YOU IDIOT!’ SO IT’S GOOD TO HAVE TATTOO ARTISTS LIKE THAT WHO ARE MAKING SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU’RE DOING

Nina, has two sides to it. “There’s the people that go that expect ‘stuff’ to happen... they try to hook up, or whatever. But I’m not of that persuasion at all. I go to have some drinks and dance around with friends all night. They’re pretty much like any other clubs, except you might see someone being fisted in the corner! But it’s the same as a rock club, everyone is so much nicer than a normal club.”

When Nina was younger she used to dress up a lot, and would go to school in her dressing-up outfits which didn’t go down particularly well. When she was about 15 or 16 she started to hang out with some older people and discovered latex. She even had her own little fetish club in Cambridge. Her father was a pyro-technician and used to take the family on tour with him, to places like France and Spain. Nina and her sister even got to join him on a Rolling Stones tour where she got to meet her favourite Rolling Stone, Charlie. She was just seven at the time and fondly remembers when “they put me and my sister in charge of the screens on the mixing desk, which really pissed Mick Jagger off because we put them all on Charlie!”

From about the age of 14 to 16, Nina used to pester her mum about getting tattooed; eventually her mum gave in and got her her first. Despite the wings on her back being “kinda crappy”, Nina is quick to say that she’s seen worse. “And it was good that my mum made me wait. After that, it wasn’t so much full steam ahead, I kind of got lots of small silly ones, like stars in various places and things like that because I didn’t have the money or know how to go about getting good ones. I guess 🙄

it wasn't really until I moved back to London and started to know people that I got big ones done."

Nina aims to be completely covered one day, but has never failed to be amazed just how much skin there is. Even with the vast amount of tattoos she has, she'll still look at herself in the mirror and think she isn't that


session already, and it took two-and-a-half hours just to put the stencil on it!"

Whilst running her own business, Nina also finds time for other ventures. Quite recently she started to get into acting and found that the more she did it, the more she enjoyed doing it. The first part she had was for a music video for the

Christmas I was doing it twice a week." Nina met Simon Drake when she and Vicki Blows were doing a shoot for Bizarre magazine in the

House of Magic. They got to chatting, got along really well, discovered that Simon also knew Nina's father, and then it turned out that he was also looking for an assistant.

Nina is married to Stich D of the metal band, The Defiled, and the idea for her most recent venture, Jane Doe Apparel, stemmed from him. "We'd been talking about it for ages. He's obviously in this band with all these guys, and they're not going to buy latex dresses. So it

sort of went from there, it seemed like an obvious place to branch out to and it's always something I wanted to do. It's great that I have all these other things too, because it gives me things to fall back on, and it's quite nice to get out of the house! It gets a bit stuffy working from home, especially on sunny days like this." 

I STARTED SMALL, RATHER THAN TAKE OUT A HUGE BANK LOAN. I JUST DID WHATEVER I COULD AND GREW IT THAT WAY, AND IT'S BECOME SUCCESSFUL

covered. "One day my mum phoned me and made me promise to her that I wouldn't tattoo my face until after she was dead, which I thought was a bit harsh!"

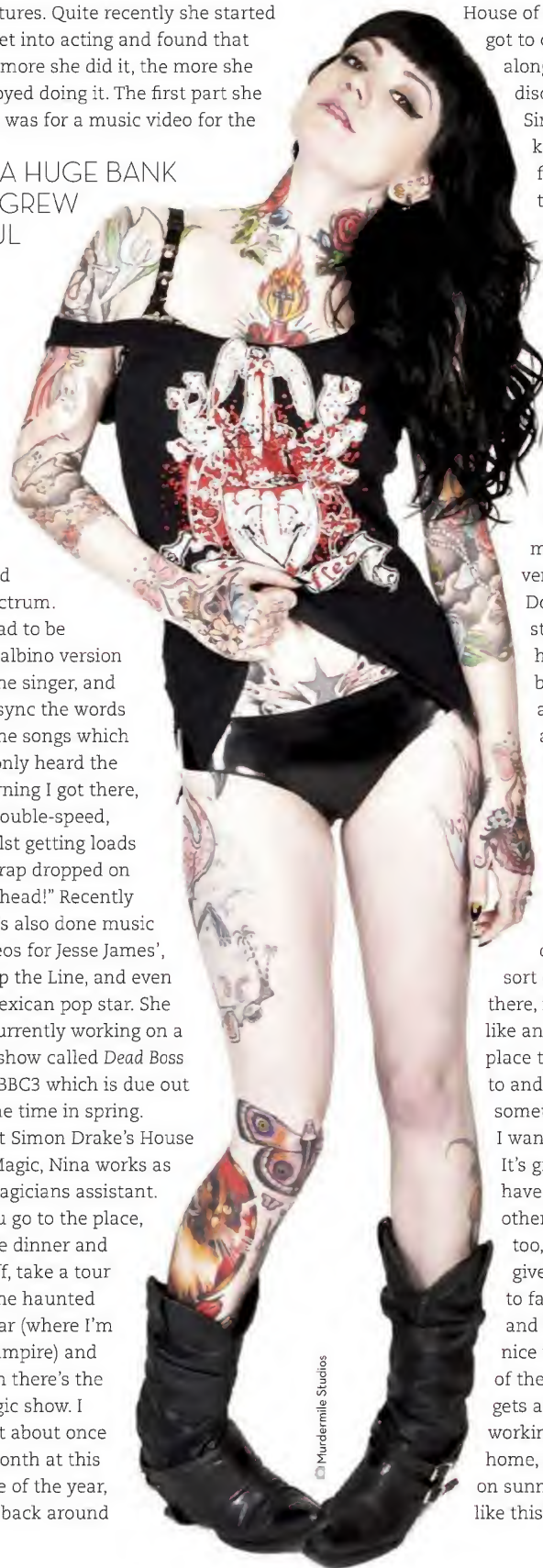
I asked Nina what kinds of tattoos she liked, "I like feminine tattoos, I guess. I have a lot of birds on me. I'm not sure you'd call the style I like new school, but it's certainly not old school. I think with the 'Ink' shows people are looking for meaning where there isn't meaning, and I find that really dull. However, I can understand that if someone's uncle has died or whatever, then it might make sense to get a portrait. That's not to say I don't have tattoos that mean something to me. I've got my cat on my calf which was done by Inma. It's just his little regal face, slightly grumpy, exactly how my cat looks."

She also has a very prominent rose on the side of her neck. "That was done by Matt Difa at Jolie Rouge. He was very reluctant to do it at first, but I convinced him in the end. I was young at the time, I was female, and not a tattooist, so I understood where he was coming from. I thought it was admirable. You see all these teenagers getting their hands and necks tattooed and you think 'oh my god, you idiot!', so it's good to have tattoo artists like that who are making sure you know what you're doing." Nina observes the fashion of neck and hand tattoos on young people as something negative. "I mean, you can't get rid of it like a bad haircut. What happens when you're 30 and want to get a job? You're fucked mate!" Nina's current project is getting her entire left leg done by Magda at Thirteen Diamonds in Piccadilly Circus. "It's going to be a dancing lady with a skull face, with loads of flowers and things around it. I've had one

band Spectrum.

"I had to be the albino version of the singer, and lip-sync the words to the songs which I'd only heard the morning I got there, in double-speed, whilst getting loads of crap dropped on my head!" Recently she's also done music videos for Jesse James', Drop the Line, and even a Mexican pop star. She is currently working on a TV show called Dead Boss for BBC3 which is due out some time in spring.

At Simon Drake's House of Magic, Nina works as a magicians assistant. "You go to the place, have dinner and stuff, take a tour of the haunted cellar (where I'm a vampire) and then there's the magic show. I do it about once a month at this time of the year, but back around



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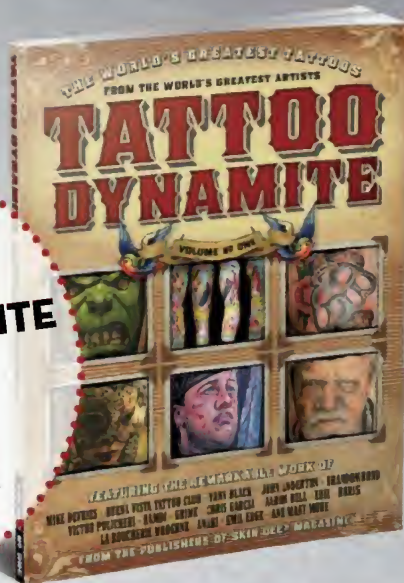
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EAST OF EDEN

It's pretty hard slipping back into a normal way of life after travelling for the last year-and-a-half. I hadn't even unpacked my bag before I decided I wouldn't be stopping for long...

After driving the length and breadth of Australia, all of a sudden Europe doesn't seem such a daunting size. Sure they drive on the wrong side of the road and speak different languages, but they tattoo the same as the rest of the world. And there are so many tattoo conventions from as close as our bordering France, to as far east as Romania and beyond.

I returned to England to weather I hadn't experienced for some time, arriving home in the middle of winter was possibly not the best plan. Yet I

had plenty of things to keep me busy – the daunting task of locating a vehicle to take to Europe was high on the agenda. I decided upon buying a van and turning it into my very own tattoo tour bus, I figured if I was going to tattoo my way across Europe, the only way to do it was by road. Flying is for those fancy folk who get paid too much. Driving gives a freedom no other means of travel can, being able to stop whenever and wherever you want, seeing the sights and experiencing each country to its fullest.



Working at Budapest convention



Artwork on display in Leipzig

by Craig Lee



5,000 Hungarian forint, sounds a lot but in actuality that's just under £15.



But getting back to the grand van plan, my Dad fits kitchens and bathrooms for a living, one of my brothers is a carpenter and the other an electrician, so with their help and guidance we managed to transform a ford transit into a decent living space to hit the road with. During the build process in the UK I worked a guest spot at the lovely Needlework Tattoo, which meant I was close enough to home to work on the van on my days off. Though in actuality, my rather skilled Dad and siblings did most of the work, for which I am very thankful!

It was finished only seven hours before we left the UK; as the final drops of sealant dried and newly laid flooring adjusted, we pulled into the Euro Tunnel. After getting off in Calais we drove through France, Belgium, Germany and Austria before arriving at our first stop, Budapest in Hungary. As we drove further East the temperature started dropping and we started seeing the grey harsh reality of Eastern Europe. Entering the City we drove past many tattoo shops which advertised hourly 'special rates' of

The convention is held in Lurdy Haz, which we puzzlingly discovered was a shopping centre, however once we got inside there was a decent sized exhibition space fully kitted out on the second floor, and it seemed to make sense to Hungarians as it was really busy. The convention was two days long and had many Hungarian artists working, the most renowned of which was probably Gege who works at Boris Tattoo. There were artists from Germany, Switzerland and Austria as well as a couple from America and Australia.

The international presence was pretty small, but the show is in its second year and is the only show in Hungary, so the whole convention thing is rather new to the locals, many of whom just turned up to wander around and see what the heck was going on. But there was a keen crowd of younger tattoo collectors eager to get a small tattoo from each of the international artists, many of whom had adjusted their prices slightly to be more affordable. The most popular



An old church in Budapest



style here definitely seems to be realistic and surreal work, portraits done in a Salvador Dali style with lots of colour, soft tones and shading seemed to be the order of the day. Some of the locals complained to me that "there are no shops here that specialise in old school work, we have to travel so far to get that kind of thing done", but for me personally it was nice to be somewhere that had a different flavour to the artwork. I met some very lovely people over the weekend, and I think tattooing here will come on leaps and bounds as 🌻





conventions grow and become more popular. It's worth remembering that up until very recently this was a communist country, but it's a fantastic city to visit regardless!

After a few days seeing the sights and relaxing in the very decorative city spas, tapped from the natural hot springs, which make Budapest so famous, we hit the road again. Driving back through Austria, we made a brief stop in Salzburg and then headed up to Germany and Leipzig where my next convention was taking place.



Eager convention-goers at Leipzig



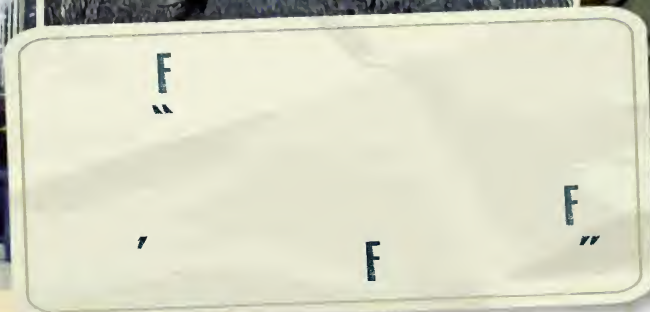
weekend. The convention was a lot larger than the previous weekend, though most of the artists working the weekend were from Germany.

Held in a huge hall that is rather like a warehouse, it's big and dark with huge steel beams holding up a corrugated metal roof, with disco lighting illuminating the whole place giving the weekend an atmosphere more like a gig or club. There was a giant indoor stage with bands playing throughout the day culminating with an AC/DC cover band... at least music

Leipzig is in eastern Germany, about an hour south of Berlin, and try as I might to learn the language I just can't get my head around it all. There's a saying here, 'life is too short to learn German' – even the artists from western Germany tell me they find the dialect here hard to understand – still, we get by and have a busy and enjoyable



Enjoying the spa in the snow



Victor Portugal working
at Budapest

is a universal language!
With a queue of people outside before the doors open, Saturday was extremely well attended. I spent the day doing lots of small token tattoos. Then Sunday rolled along with a fashion show and dancers onstage throughout the day, but again I find myself doing lots of smaller tattoos. I'm not sure if this is because of the people's tastes or the fact I don't speak much German, either way I'm not complaining.

People were friendly and made an effort to help you with the language, and people seemed to appreciate the fact we had travelled to be here



so an enjoyable weekend is had. I am looking forward to returning to Germany to work more shows over the coming months, as well as getting to take in some more of its charm, and dare I say it, beer! 🍺

LET THE DEAD SPEAK

by Pascal Bagot and Paul Koudounaris

Enter if you will into this peculiar homage Paul Koudounaris gives to the Grim Reaper with his erudite and amazingly illustrated book, *The Empire of Death*...

The Empire of death by Paul Koudounaris
Ed: Thames & Hudson
www.thamesandhudson.com

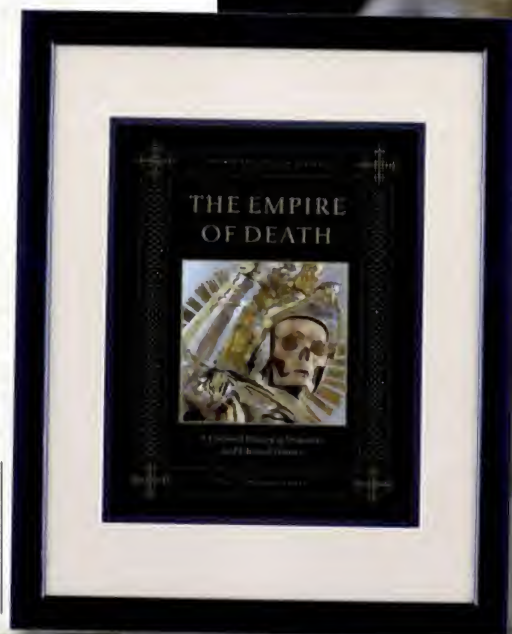
CONTACT
www.empiredelamort.com

Essentially, *The Empire of Death* is the culmination of what happened when American, Paul Koudounaris, dedicated five years of his life to researching the spread of the 'Memento mori' culture that reverberated through the centuries and beat in the heart of the Catholic faith. Ossuaries and charnel houses across Europe were conscientiously photographed, documented, and put in context. "I was wandering around in Central and Eastern Europe without any particular objective," Paul explains. "I was aware

of some of the more famous ossuaries, but one day I wandered by accident into the Kostnice (Czech for charnel house) in Melnik, Czech Republic. It was in some ways a revelation for me, because not only was it complex in construction, but there was a very erudite iconography – but moreso, it was a fascinating place because even though it holds its own with the more famous ones, no one seemed to know about it. Even locally, no one seems to know about it, it had pretty much been completely forgotten about.

"Anyway, after that I began

I REALIZED I HAD FOUND A TOPIC THAT HAD ONCE BEEN AN IMPORTANT, EVEN VITAL, PART OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE. BUT HAD SINCE BEEN OVERLOOKED





wondering how many similar places might be around, hidden in villages or underneath city streets, with the people above completely oblivious to the stacks of bones which contain their own ancestors. So I started doing some research and was shocked by how many I found. I realized I had found a topic that had once been an important, even vital, part of religious culture, but had since been overlooked – as I would eventually realize, overlooked because our own relationship with death has changed so much over the past few centuries. In the end it took about five years for this project to come to a conclusion. I photographed on four continents, Europe (obviously), South America, Asia (the memorial stupa at the Killing Fields are in the book), and Africa (Egypt – St. Catherine's in Sinai)."

WHAT EXACTLY IS A MEMENTO MORI?

A Memento mori is a reminder of death; it just reminds the viewer that death is inevitable so they might then assess how one lives. Since

we are reminded that death is inevitable, and in most theological systems, one's actions in life dictate one's fate after death, the Memento mori can be a powerful tool. You will find a lot of Memento mori symbolism with the Catholics, because with death in a Christian sense, comes Judgment. They are very fond of it and apparently find it efficacious. Most of the sites in my book are Catholic, and there are a few which are Orthodox.

CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOME KIND OF TREND FOR MEMENTO MORIS IN EUROPE?

Well, first of all, I think we need to differentiate a few things. The trend for memento goes in and out of fashion over several centuries. You don't find it much in the early Christian world. It starts becoming popular more during the medieval period, and there are any number of reasons potentially why – things as divergent as millennialism

and the Black Plague have been mentioned by people who study this kind of thing, as well as many other reasons. In the end it is no doubt a confluence of factors. But if you are asking about the charnel houses, they start becoming popular in terms of openly displaying bones (with windows so you can look in, etc.) during this same period – so the charnel houses, which had been around for a long time as storage spaces – start to become used for Memento mori purposes at around the mid-to-late medieval period, and Memento mori motifs



become popular in general. But that set of factors is not involved in these massive, extremely elaborate bone houses that start during the Baroque period. Those, I attribute to a strain of morbid religiosity that becomes part of Catholicism during the Counter-Reformation, especially within certain monastic orders.

WHICH ONE WILL LEAVE YOU WITH THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE MEMORY?

That is a hard question to ask, but to answer, I will say this: the Palermo Catacombs are the most fantastic macabre site in the world. If I were to recommend only one place for someone to visit, if they really wanted a fantastic, bizarre, wonderful, and morbid experience, I would recommend the Palermo Catacombs.

WHAT DO OUR CONTEMPORARIES NOW THINK ABOUT THESE PLACES?

I coined a term in the introduction to the book, the 'dialogue with death'. By that, I mean the relationship and interaction one can have with the dead when death is considered not a terminus or an impassable boundary, but rather as a transition to another form of being. Nowadays, at least in Western (particularly European and American) culture, death is conceived of as an impassable boundary. So the idea that we would engage them, keep the dead visibly near us, and allow them to be a part of a religious sanctuary and a part of spiritual life, seems nowadays as queer or perverse – in our terms, it almost seems to be a violation of taboo (in particular taboos about the treatment of the dead which we now expect, and taboos about what we consider appropriate for spiritual shrines). But the great ossuaries are indeed highly spiritual places, and they were highly appropriate in their own day (the fabulous ossuary in Rome, the crypt of Santa Maria della Concezione, was paid for by the Pope and his family – if these are the people who paid to have it constructed, obviously it was totally orthodox

and appropriate as a statement of Catholic faith). So the disconnect is on our end, not on the end of the ossuaries – it is a failure of modern preconception and interpretation which causes us to find these sites to be somehow strange or inappropriate.

WHAT WERE THE BELIEFS ATTACHED TO THE SKULLS?

There could be any number of beliefs, a lot of it local folklore. There were various superstitions about how one could communicate with the dead through the skulls, and the souls could in turn do favors for the living. But there were other beliefs. In Greece, monks used to look at the

color of the skull, or markings on it, as indications of someone's fate, and whether they had made it to Heaven.

COULD YOU TELL AND EXPLAIN ABOUT THE DESIGNS PEOPLE USED TO PAINT ON SKULLS THROUGH TIMES?

The Greek monks are the ones who actually started the skull painting, but they only did it to mark bones in case a person got raised to sainthood, so they would be able to find them and enshrine them. More famous is the kind of thing that later went on in the Alps, with the painting of the names and designs on the forehead of the skulls. Many, many parishes used to do it – nowadays it is mostly known

IT IS A FAILURE OF MODERN PRECONCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION WHICH CAUSES US TO FIND THESE SITES TO BE SOMEHOW STRANGE OR INAPPROPRIATE.



through the town of Hallstatt in Austria, where there are still 600 painted skulls, but back in the day many towns had similar huge collections. Painting the skulls was a way to prevent the bones from becoming anonymous – in the bone pile everyone is equal, the mightiest and the most humble are indistinguishable. But some people didn't like the idea that their relatives might be reduced to anonymity, so the painting of skulls preserved their identity and allowed a kind of family relic which could be fetishised.

COULD YOU EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF THE SKULL AND CROSSED BONES?

The skull and crossbones have 🦴





I DON'T KNOW THAT THE SKULL WAS EVEN PARTICULARLY 'FASCINATING' FOR SOMEONE BACK THEN – THEY WERE QUITE USED TO TANGIBLE REMINDERS OF MORTALITY.

somehow been tied to pirates (thanks, Disney), but that is an old motif that was intended on the one hand as a Memento mori, but on the other, as the promise of redemption and resurrection – those bones would be raised again. The skull at the base of the crucifix is very old motif. It refers to the skull of Adam, and the idea that Christ was crucified over the spot where Adam died – Adam brings original sin, and with it, death to us all, and then Christ redeems it.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS PHENOMENON THAT MOVED THE SKULL FROM A SACRED STATUS TO A POPULAR ICON?

There are many things throughout history that have been sacred, but eventually wind up reduced to the kitsch of popular culture. In the case of

these bones, I think the change comes during the Romantic period. There is a kind of darkness and macabre in Romanticism – you see it in the visual arts with painters like Henri Fuseli or Goya, you find it in literature with stuff like *Frankenstein* and gothic fiction. That period comes after the Enlightenment (in France), when a lot of things started getting desacralised. Look, for instance, at what Voltaire (French writer) has to say about relics – he is calling relics basically a bunch of garbage. So preceding the Romantic era you have a period in which many things became desacralised, and thus divested of their theological meaning. And like I said, there is a certain strain of dark Romanticism, and I think there is a group of highly creative people who are inspired by certain macabre themes as titillating because of their mysterious character, and they render them in a profane way which is very accessible to popular culture. To me, that movement is the turning point that redirects a motif like the skull from sacred to profane. It then becomes increasingly profaned through the 19th century before eventually in the 20th century, it's ripe for commodification – it becomes a typical commercial motif, and at that point it degenerates into complete kitsch, devoid of any sacred meaning.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS FASCINATION FOR THE SKULL EVEN TODAY?

Well, I think the skull might even be more fascinating today than it was back then – because of the disconnection we have with death, the skull is maybe more mysterious to us than it was to someone in the 17th century, who was acculturated into seeing the real thing quite frequently. I don't know that the skull was even particularly 'fascinating' for someone back then – they were quite used to tangible reminders of mortality. But the skull sure is fascinating for us. Like I said, I think it's because we are so disconnected from the dead now.

DID YOU COMMUNICATE WITH DEATH DURING THIS STUDY?

I had a few experiences that would be classified as 'occult'. You can interpret these things in so many ways, though – psychology, science, or metaphysics, the interpretation is always up to the individual, and there are no easy answers. I had one particularly bizarre incident in Bolivia (I had been researching the Fiesta de las Natitas in La Paz, which is mentioned briefly in the book). I photographed some skulls that were considered sacred and had not been previously photographed – the photos disappeared (and the ones I had taken on film actually caught fire when they were being developed), and some other strange things happened which made everyone decide that one of the souls had followed me home.



Portsmouth Ink

**TATTOO & BODY
PIERCING**



Angel



I Graduated from University of Fine Arts in Bulgaria, and have been tattooing now for a few years and do it with love.

In Dec 2011 I moved from Bulgaria to join Portsmouth Ink studio, its great here I have made new friends with the same interests as myself. Having fun while working.

I just have to tattoo, black and grey is my preference, portraits, animals any interesting and unique things, so I can perfect my technique.

My favourite tattoo artists are Bob Tyrrell, Jun Cha, Guy Aitchison, and Victor Portugal.

In the little spare time I have, I like to paint portraits, read specialized books on painting and tattooing, drawing sketches for car designs, and to construct radio controlled helicopters.

Angel is based in our Southsea studio, to book in with him call us on 02392 812323.

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PLEASE MENTION SKIN DEEP WHEN RESPONDING TO ADVERTS

the beast within

A fine arts student, licensed New York real estate agent, gay rights activist and cancer survivor, NY Ink's floor manager is a man of many facets. Maybe that's why he needs two names – RoBear and RoBeast



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Barbara H. Moore © Creative High Roller Tattoo

A born and bred New Yorker, the Big Apple's influence on Robert 'RoBear' Chinosi never falters – "It's the capital of the world to me in so many different ways" – so it seems only fitting that after only a couple of auditions he was chosen to join Wooster Street Social Club as floor manager on TLC's aptly named show, *NY Ink*.

"Ami and TLC saw some footage of me in action [and] they showed up soon thereafter to meet me in person at High Roller Tattoo. They walked in and I greeted them like I would greet everyone, with a smile. I said 'Hello, how can I help you?' I did a brief consultation of tattoos with them and then showed them around the shop. The next week were the finals at a bar while we were all enjoying a good cocktail and I was hired for the job the next week."

Although RoBear was accustomed to working as a manager at a hot NYC shop, namely High Roller Tattoo, nothing can really prepare one for life in front of a prying lens.

"The first couple of days I wasn't as comfortable working in front of the

cameras, but soon took them out of the equation. My job is to make sure everything is set up properly, broken down correctly and everything is sterilized; I am running the floor of a 6,000 sq ft tattoo shop in NYC and that was always my priority, forget the cameras and just do the job I was hired to do. This process is not quick or easy and isn't glamorous at all, so focusing on that responsibility made it easier to just go on with my daily routine and make sure I was doing everything right.

"A part of me felt it was a little invasive at first, but that is what I signed up for. At times of vulnerability or weakness, it's not ideal to have it be shot, but it's those times where you are victorious and prevail that make it worth it."

Having no say in what episodes look like when they're aired, it's easy to imagine the artists of *NY Ink* might sometimes feel like they or certain situations were represented unfairly, so it's almost odd to hear RoBear say, "I think they portrayed me well and have no complaints."

"The show is filmed 12 to 14 hours a day, five to six days a week and 🍷"



AT TIMES OF VULNERABILITY OR WEAKNESS, IT'S NOT IDEAL TO HAVE IT BE SHOT, BUT IT'S THOSE TIMES WHERE YOU ARE VICTORIOUS AND PREVAIL THAT MAKE IT WORTH IT



SOMETIMES I LAUGH AT MY FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, AND SOMETIMES I CRINGE WHEN I SEE A SHOT WHERE I CAN TELL THAT I'M TIRED AND CRANKY

three to four months straight, so there is a lot of footage from a lot of different circumstances... I think I was edited to be a little more short fused than maybe I am on average, but what you see is what you get and those feelings, emotions and situations happen. I go through moods where I think more rationally or sometimes more aggressively; I am as good as I am bad and it all depends on the people I am working with.

"I do watch the show to see how the episodes were made, edited, executed and how they represented our lives in making the show and running Wooster Street. I get a kick out of it, actually. Sometimes I laugh at my facial expressions and sometimes I cringe when I see a shot where I can tell that I'm tired and cranky and have had bad day.

"The guys are at times such immature asses! When they get out of control, regardless if the camera is there or not, I confront them, tell them to grow up. I have a softer and more joking side, but I take business

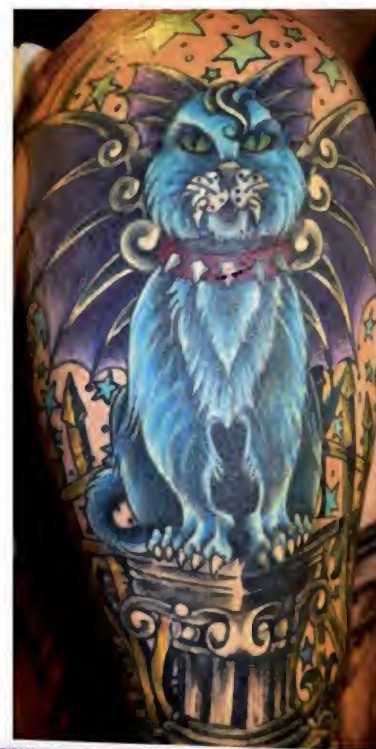
very seriously and I am there to run the shop... they are not used to having someone like me around, so I am used to getting all types of attention, whether it's them poking fun that I carry around a bag or I am putting on eyeliner. I am somewhat of a rarity in the tattoo industry. And at the end of each day, if there is something learned from each other and more is understood, tolerated and accepted, that is amazing.

"We all come from extremely different backgrounds and all have such very strong personalities, it's inevitable that we fight. Tattoo shops are not structured places of work, it is somewhat of a free-for-all creative place where amazing art and things happen, and artists are often a little nuts, but that is what makes them great artists, but also pains in the ass."

TATTOOS TELLING TALES

Rapidly running out of prime real estate on his body, RoBear's love affair with ink started at 17 with a Gemini symbol.

Deeply involved in the creative process behind each of his pieces – "My body and skin is the canvas I am giving to my artists, so we come





ROBEAR IS BORN

When I was 16, I met a girl named Natascha at BIGLYNY - Bi-sexual, Gay, Lesbian Youth of New York - held at the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center on West 13th Street in NYC. She came up to me and said 'You're cute and furry, what's your name?' I said Rob and she said 'No, you're RoBear' and growled at me! Well, it was love and true friendship at first sight.

together as one so that we are both happy with what we create." RoBear's tattoos are a depiction of his life.

"I sometimes find myself staring at all my tattoos and going back in time through them [to] the ups that were so high when I felt true bliss, happiness and a sense of calm that could never be taken away from me. [And] the horrible and horrific downs where I was weak, vulnerable, beat up in so many different ways because I was gay."

One look at RoBear's body of work

and you know exactly what he's talking about. Like the pin-up of the friend who first dubbed him 'RoBear'. "She's a pastry artist in NYC, so I did a traditional piece with her in an apron, holding a beautiful cake and looking as sexy and beautiful as she really is. Without Natascha, the name RoBear or RoBeast simply wouldn't exist, so it is a well-deserved piece that has such sentiment.

"The inspiration for my back [done by Cory Good and Tony Silva] was

to represent a bright and positive angelic side of myself, but also have the darker side included. I am a Gemini after all; we have that duality. To me, the angel wings and skulls represent the good and bad, not only in myself, but in life, the world and everything that we come across in life.

"My two most recent portraits [of Lee Majors and Lindsay Wagner] are from my favorite shows of all time, *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman*... I am obsessed with supernatural and superhero abilities. As a child, I would watch the shows and actually pretend I was bionic by jumping off the roof of my house, trying to bend and break things and pretend I was running 60 miles per hour like they did. I learned that I wasn't bionic after spraining my wrist and breaking my ankle!"

However, one of RoBear's most powerful and inspiring pieces is also one of the simplest - the word 'Survivor' on his upper chest.

"In 2010 I was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer and had a six-inch malignant tumor growing in my stomach and back; I didn't even know it until I complained to my doctor about a pain in my side. After X-rays, an MRI, CAT scan, PET scan and biopsies, I had to immediately have an invasive surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering here in NYC to remove it or I would die. It was one centimeter from metastasizing to my bones, so we caught it in time. It was one of the most horrible 🦋

THE INSPIRATION FOR MY BACK WAS TO REPRESENT A BRIGHT AND POSITIVE ANGELIC SIDE OF MYSELF, BUT ALSO HAVE THE DARKER SIDE INCLUDED





experiences. Cancer is a lifelong battle. As of right now it has yet to come back, but I must keep on top of this and go back to the doctor for scans every three to six months due its rarity and high rate of return."

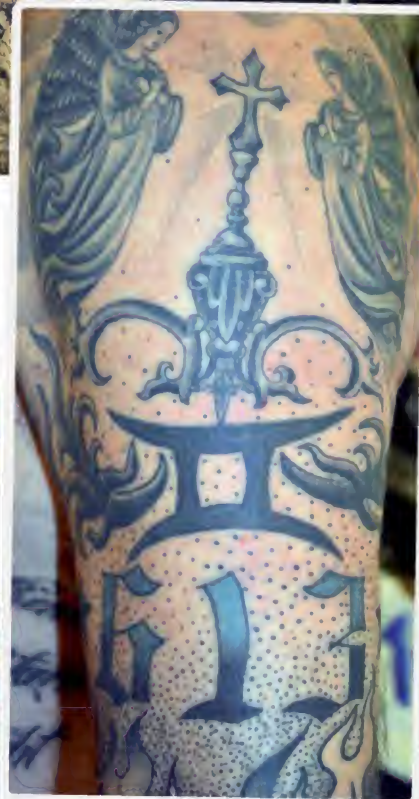
FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

Armed with the ability to reach mass audiences, RoBear has often expressed his desire to positively represent strong gay men who just so happen to love getting tattooed. Judging by fan feedback, he's doing a darn good job.

"I learned very soon after the first season started airing that I was considered a role model, which I am proud and honored to be. In the States, the rate of young gay suicide



YOU CAN TAKE THAT NEGATIVE AND MAKE IT POSITIVE IF YOU STICK WITH YOUR DREAMS, PASSIONS AND LOVES. IT MAKES YOU A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH AND YOU BECOME UNSTOPPABLE



THE REAL 666

My mom always jokes around and reminds me that I was born on the sixth month, weighed six pounds and at 6:01 – so I've always been a little bit of a badass. 666 is not the devil's number, it's mine! [laughs]

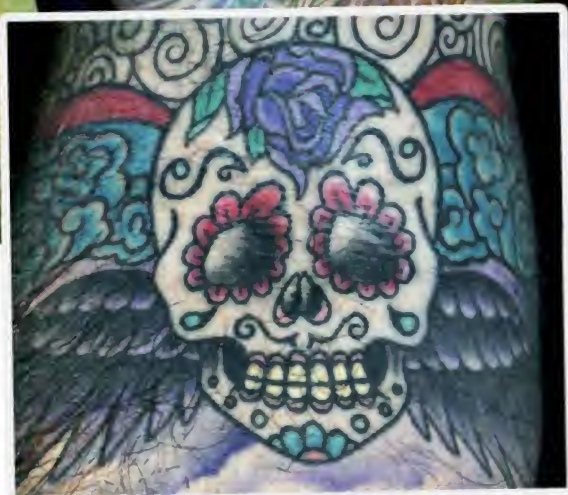
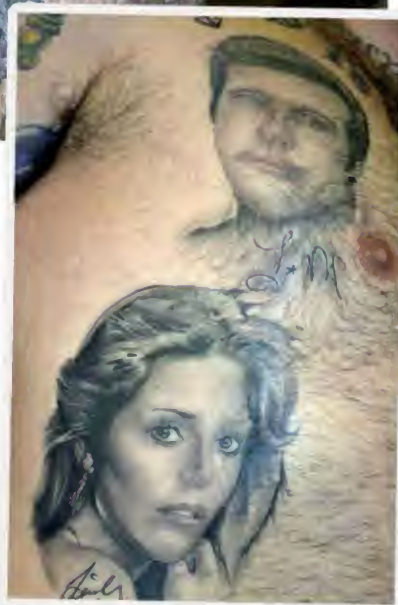
is on the rise, so being someone that they look up to and draw strength from is amazing. They are not alone. That makes it so worthwhile if I can represent and show people that you can do anything, be anything and not be intimidated or scared. You can take that negative and make it positive if you stick with your dreams, passions and loves. It makes you a force to be reckoned with and you become unstoppable.

"I remember many years ago I went into a tattoo shop and the guy was extremely rude. I wanted to get a cat in memory of mine who had passed at the age of 18 – R.I.P Mona Moose – but I didn't want a realistic portrait and wanted it to be edgy and medieval and not just a domestic tuxedo-colored 🐾



INKED BY MASSACRE

Megan Massacre, my friend and co-star, did a hybrid animated-type of portrait of myself when I was a teenager and crossed it with a Living Dead Doll, which I used to collect. She is such an amazing talent and we just laughed and had a great time while she was doing it. I gave her most of the creative control with that one, but had her put a knife in my hand to represent my dad being a butcher in NYC for the past 50 years.



cat on my arm because she lived so long that she was magical and had mystical qualities. He just started drawing something right there and then went into the back and a few minutes later I heard him say to his co-workers, 'This faggot wants an evil cat.' Well, as soon as I heard that, I just left. It's funny because as I was driving away I saw him outside the shop, holding a drawing in his hand, looking for me. What a loser!"

Today, RoBear's stomach tattoo is a reminder of the strength of

I NEED TO STAY STIMULATED AND LIKE TO HAVE MY HAND IN ALL DIFFERENT THINGS. I CANNOT STAY STAGNANT - ONE STOPS LEARNING AND GROWING IF THEY DO ONLY ONE THING

those before him. Reading 'Silence Equals Death', it was "inspired by a pro-gay symbol used by activists in the 1970s that was a huge start of ending the labeling of gays which set forth a massive change for freedom for the gay community and for us to have a voice and be heard."

SKILLS TO PAY THE BILLS

In addition to working in tattoo shops over the past five years, RoBear also has 15 years of experience in construction and design management, interior design and fashion styling, is a licensed real estate agent, and is studying towards a fine arts degree

with a minor in business, which he hopes to follow with a master's in studio art or business administration. Phew, that's a mouthful.

"I need to stay stimulated and like to have my hand in all different things. I cannot stay stagnant - one stops learning and growing if they do only one thing.

"My passion is to really utilize my creative artsy side with my strong business skills. I have made it a point to educate myself on many different industries and love that I can be creative, manage and do everything from soup to nuts."

Multi-faceted indeed. 🍄



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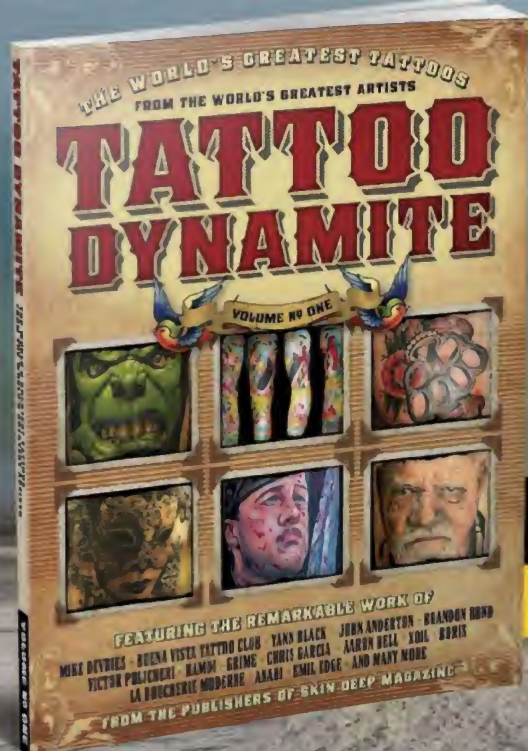
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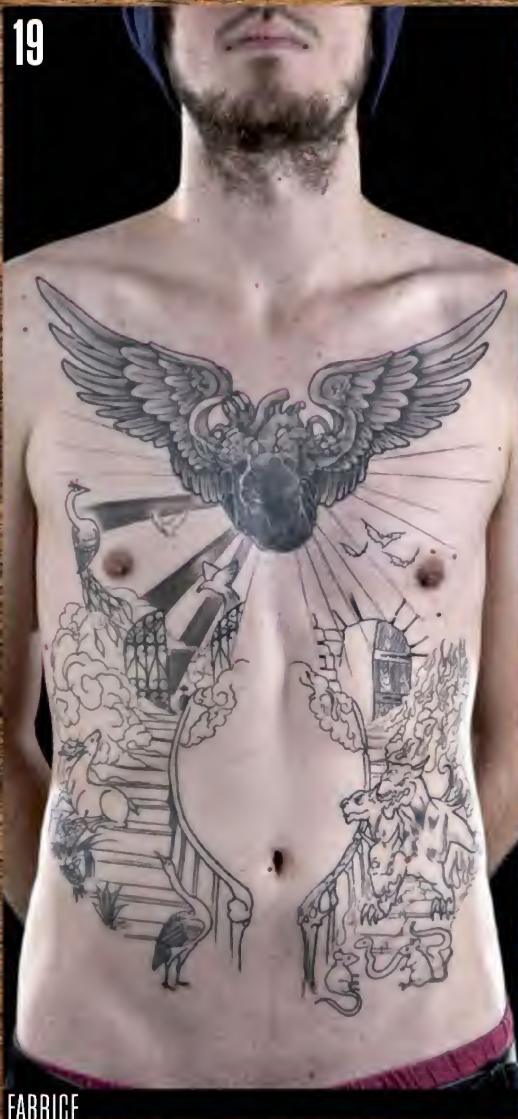
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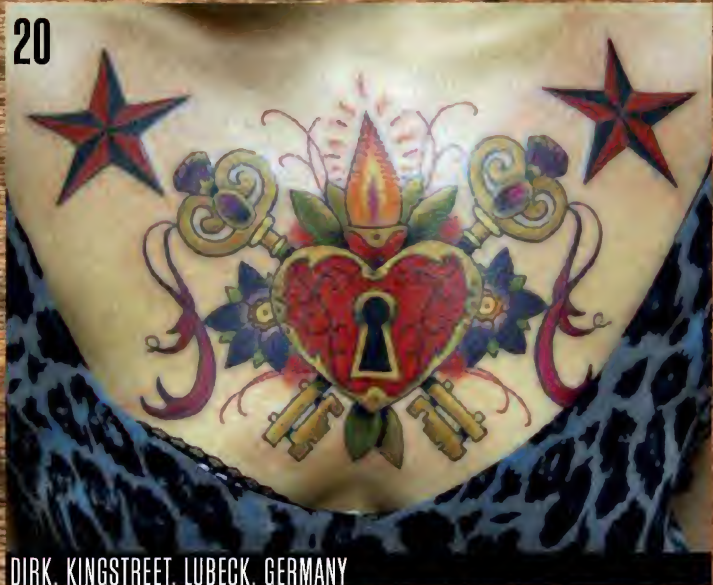
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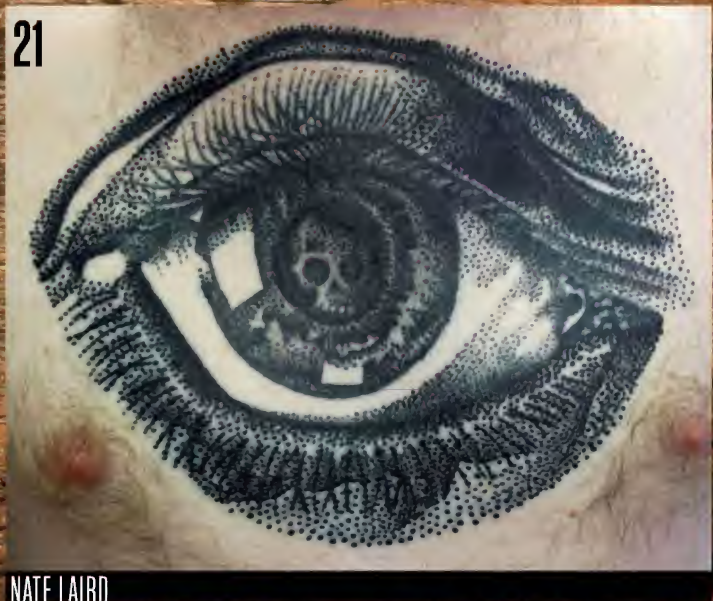
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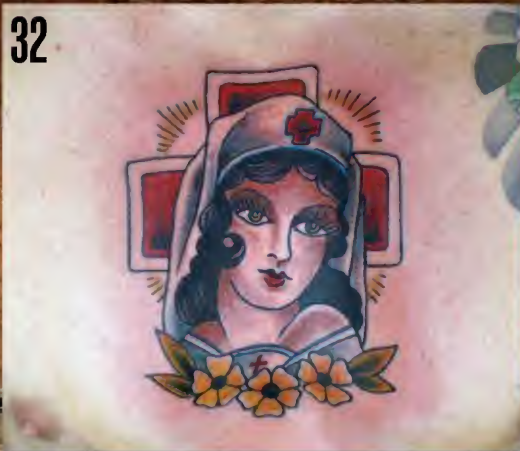
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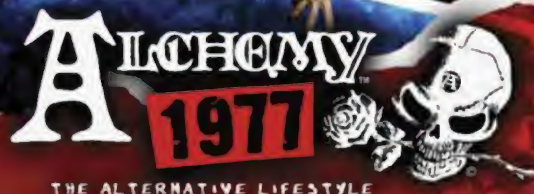
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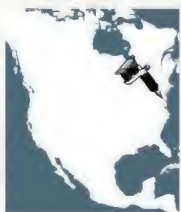
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Spending years immersed in the tattoo industry can put anyone in danger of monotony and it takes a special someone to restore faith. Tattoo prophet, anyone? Equipped with crazy talent and uncanny entertainment value, Mike Moses is the man for the job, but don't take my word for it...

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"There was an instance in kindergarten around Halloween where we were in recess and instead of playing with the blocks, eating paste or setting other children on fire, I decided I was going to draw a bunch of Halloween-related stuff," says Moses of his artistic beginnings while setting the scene for

the kind of shenanigans one can quickly learn to expect from the New York-based tattooer.

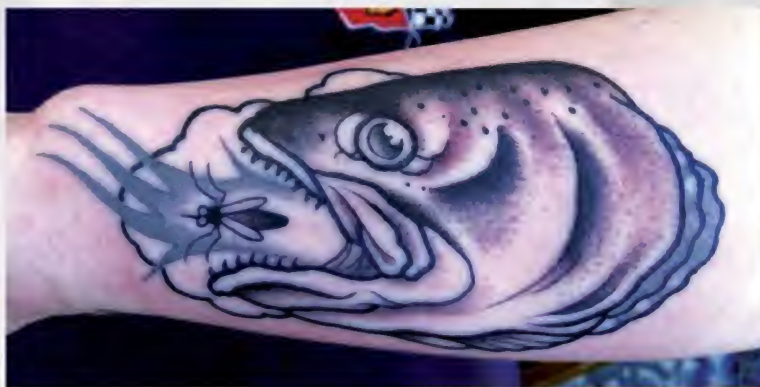
"Some kid in class was blown away by my Grim Reaper and said I 'must be an artist'. I was young and impressionable... I totally bought it. Been faking it ever since."

Good ol' brotherly rivalry and

SOME KID IN CLASS WAS BLOWN AWAY BY MY GRIM REAPER AND SAID I "MUST BE AN ARTIST". I WAS YOUNG AND IMPRESSIONABLE... I TOTALLY BOUGHT IT



motherly support didn't hurt Moses' efforts either. "After my brother drew a killer rendition of a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle – which totally pissed me off because he didn't even like them – I set about the task of kicking his ass at drawing. My mom noticed my interest and enrolled me in afterschool art classes. It was also a good way to make



sure I was out of trouble; she was a single parent and got off work many hours after I got out of school.

"I kept going year after year, teachers noticed my effort and kept suggesting programs and it became part of my identity. I took every art class my school system offered and ended up going to Governor's School for the Arts, state-funded specialized schooling for 'gifted' persons [in Virginia] and eventually went to college for art as well.

"Once [there], I decided that most 'artists' were complete self-righteous assholes, my 'education' was a fucking joke and I hated it. I dropped out and was already working as a

end of the day, you're going to go home and life is going to go on, so you know what? Fuck 'em." Best advice I ever got. I stopped screwing people up too badly, I calmed down, it was just what I needed."

Anxiety conquered, Moses now gifts anyone who sits in his chair with top-level work, including attention-grabbing head tattoos.

"I only started doing them recently – they certainly take some extra care so you don't either strangle or blind your client, but I love doing them. The skin is like butter. It's a nice open area and they just look too damn cool. I've been thinking about getting one myself, but I



I STARTED HAVING A REALLY TOUGH TIME WITH ANXIETY, WHICH WAS REALLY ODD FOR ME. I HAD ALWAYS BEEN TOTALLY FUCKING FEARLESS BEFORE THAT POINT; IT REALLY THREW ME

desk hand at a tattoo shop up the street so I was given the chance to apprentice under my good friend, Fred Pinckard."

Starting with a rose on his own ankle, which took about four-and-a-half hours to execute, Moses continued earning his stripes as an apprentice for a year-and-a-half, tattooing exhilarating designs, from Kanji to names, when an unforeseen obstacle appeared.

"I started having a really tough time with anxiety, which was really odd for me. I had always been totally fucking fearless before that point; it really threw me. I didn't know how to react to what my body was doing to me. Fred noticed I was taking it really hard, so he pulled me aside one day and said, 'Look, all this time you're worried about messing up these people, but at the



CAREER DOUBTS

There was definitely a time when I didn't think I'd be a tattooer. I was in college, studying sculpture as a way to pursue my original interest of getting into special effects and set/creature design for movies. My sister had been tattooing for a good few years before me, so when I got offered the chance to learn, I took it... I'm still kinda shocked. Doubts about my career? Fuck, only every morning.

doubt I'll be shaving my head anytime soon. I'm very much against cutting my dirty long-ass hippy hair, it's the source of all my unholy powers!"

Although, he'd have no problem branding yours truly – "Barbara, if you get over here, I would love to tattoo the side of your head, let's do it!" – so there may be an interesting follow-up story a few issues down the line.

TALES OF TRAVEL

Moving from Richmond, VA, to Brooklyn, NY, last year, Moses now calls Thicker Than Water Tattoo home. A feat that was a lot harder than it sounds.

"A little more than a year ago I had made the decision to move to New York. I didn't have any contacts there – it was just where I was headed. I went up there for a weekend and had a list of every shop I could think of that was well respected, along with some recommendations from friends. I walked into each one of them with 🍷



my portfolio, which was a fucking living nightmare, and asked for a job. Thicker Than Water was the first place that really gave me a shot, even though the owner, Nate, who is one of my best friends now, was a total dick to me until he saw my work," laughs Moses.

"He walked off with my book and started talking to the guys tattooing there, which I perceived to be a good thing. As it turns out, he thought I had stolen all the work in it and was trying to figure out where he had seen it all before. Luckily, they had a copy of a magazine I had a few pages in right there in the shop and that was the confusion. As soon as I pointed that out to him, his whole demeanor changed and he welcomed me in and started showing me around. What a guy! Loooooove you, Nate, you dick!"

Tattooing for nearly nine years, Moses says it hasn't gotten old yet, although clients don't always make the gig an easy one.

"I'm inclined to agree with those tattooers that say people are the hardest part of our job, and I'll extend that further to cover other tattooers. A whole lot of tattooers are complete assholes. I've been shit on by people in this industry for a long time and I don't really get what the point of being a fucking prick to everyone is. I get the whole

FROM RICHMOND TO BROOKLYN

The greatest thing I've noticed about this profession is that tattooing is pretty much the same everywhere. It's such a commitment to get into this industry in the first place that if you're around people who take it seriously, the love of what we do permeates everything. Everywhere is home.



I'M VERY MUCH AGAINST CUTTING MY DIRTY LONG-ASS HIPPIE HAIR, IT'S THE SOURCE OF ALL MY UNHOLY POWERS

deal of what tattooers think of people who get tattoos and how irritating clients can be sometimes and that we're all miserable, self-loathing people – it's part of being an artist, but fuck, don't be a dick, end of story.

"Clients typically don't realize what goes into what we do, most of them are not artists and just don't get it. But even if you're the type of person that sees clients as food, are you gonna dropkick your \$40 steak across the room before you eat it? I should think not. I like my meat tender too, but c'mon."

Even so, Moses has been lucky enough to be tattooed by more great artists than he cares to recount, making



the question of his personal favorite tattoo a challenge.

"There's no way you'd allow me to blow up every friend of mine that I've been tattooed by in one article, so yeah, I go the other road. I have a really, really shitty koi fish on my leg by someone I fucking hate immensely and very deeply. I hope she chokes on something insanely spiny out of nowhere if she ever happens to read this. "Wiggles my voodoo fingers and works some serious black magic" That being said, I'd love to go back in time and stop myself from getting that one in particular by pushing her into traffic. Twice. It's okay, I've been hit by a car, I can say that.

"I got hit by a car on foot and nearly taken out of the game permanently. I'm lucky I remember to put on clothes before I leave the house, which may or may not be good for my tips at the end of the day, but I doubt I'd make it to work without them. Though, I do live in NY. Hell, I could probably walk into City

Hall naked and they'd ignore me just like any good New Yorker should."

MULTI-TASKING MOSES

In addition to tattooing, Moses has his hands in a number of jars – incidentally, he's literally created a series of specimen jars – but prides himself on being rather elusive about it all.

"Downtown is something I've been working on for a long time. It's become a moniker for my internet presence, though I don't walk around calling myself The Drowntown – that would be weird. Someone actually did that to me just the other day and it kinda bugged me out.

"It originally was the title for a solo music project I was working on some years ago, which I'd love to pick back up eventually. I have a whole mythos and concept behind it, but we'd need another whole magazine for me to explain it all and not sound like an idiot. 🍌

IF I CAN MAKE ENOUGH EXTRA MONEY TO AFFORD TO PURSUE THE AVENUES THAT I HAVE INTEREST IN AND BRING MY MANY RIDICULOUS PROJECTS TO LIFE, THEN I'LL BE HAPPY TOO



"It's a place where some very bad things have happened, weird shit lives there now as a result – it's a place you don't really want to find yourself. If you get my book I'm about to put out – shameless self-promoting! – there are two photographs in it from the Drowntown. The dirt witch and the mad dogs, both are partial inhabitants of the Drowntown; and no, I'm not going to explain that either. You'll just have to get the book. Suckers!"

And that's not all he occupies his non tattoo-filled time with. "I have a

lot of other interests that I try to find hours for while tattooing full-time. I do think it's essential for people to have other interests and passions outside of what they do for a living. People need to be multi-faceted... I don't believe in letting any one thing rule your entire world, it warps people's minds.

"I want to work for the respect I get and get the respect I feel is



I'M INCLINED TO AGREE WITH THOSE TATTOOERS THAT SAY PEOPLE ARE THE HARDEST PART OF OUR JOB, AND I'LL EXTEND THAT FURTHER TO COVER OTHER TATTOOERS

MAKING CHANGES

Honestly, I'm not the type of person to attempt to change the tattoo industry. If I can change a few minds about what's interesting and what isn't, then I hope it's accomplished by people seeing my work. I can't make people stop tracing other people's work, I can't make people try harder, I can't make people stop being assholes. Hopefully one day they'll do it on their own. See what I just did there?

deserved by my hard work. If I can make enough extra money to afford to pursue the avenues that I have interest in and bring my many ridiculous projects to life, then I'll be happy too. If there's one thing I've got, it's projects. Ask anyone that knows me, they'll say 'Fuck Mike and all his stupid projects!'

Which only leaves one question: Who is Mike Moses? "Currently, because I'm on a train for seven hours from Richmond back to New York, Mike Moses is hungry, but overall, I think Mike Moses just is. I like how you just tricked me into talking about myself in the third person. You Muhammad Ali'd me, damn it. You win this round!" 🐉

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Talent is a wily beast and can be tricky to pin down. Sometimes you can go years wondering what it is you're good at; some of us might even feel we haven't worked it out yet. Not James Ellington. He caught up with his talent at a young age – as you'd expect from someone who can run the 100 metres in just over ten seconds

"I realised I was quick from the age of about five or six," he says in a deep drawl far removed from his speed on the track. Instead of taking part in the traditional school sports day disciplines of the Sudden Cold or the Lane Excuse, he'd get out there, run the races and win. "It was my favourite day of the year. I just loved running."

His mum spotted his latent talent as well and encouraged him to do something with it, leading him towards training rather than pushing him, according to Ellington. "I was 14 and living in a troublesome area, so she probably led me into it to give me something to do." The area in question was the Bellingham estate in Lewisham; does he think things might have taken a less edifying turn without running?

"I'm not sure. I was one of the most ambitious of my friends and always saw myself doing something different to the normal nine-to-five. But, if I hadn't got into the running I could have gone down the path that a lot of my friends did, which was getting into trouble and not doing much good with their lives!"

ON YOUR MARKS

It's all speculation, of course, because he took the path to the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre in October 1999 instead, where he met coach, John Powell. The veteran trainer already had an enviable reputation that even the 13-year-old Ellington



THE TATTOOS

"I wanted to go mythological!" says Ellington, admitting that his body art has made him a walking motivational poster. Here's a rundown of some of Ellington's ink:

Valkyrie on horseback: "I did my research and found that the Valkyries watched over the Vikings, and that they only followed the strongest warriors; so that was like me in my athletics quest."

All seeing eye: "I'm not a religious person, but it represents whatever's out there that we don't know about."

Sphinx: "It's inspired by a design I saw outside a temple."

Revolutionary fist and star: "They symbolise doing what you want to do."

Skulls: "They're a bit of decoration, but they could also be my victims on the track!" [laughs]

Skulls and roses (right arm): "They represent the good and bad people you meet."

Chest: "It's 'victorious', in Latin" – which probably speaks for itself...

EVERY ATHLETE IS DIFFERENT AND A COACH NEEDS TO KNOW THEIR ATHLETE, KNOW HOW THEY RESPOND TO DIFFERENT KINDS OF TRAINING

had heard of on the grapevine. "I wanted to be part of a fast group I could look up to and run with, so I went down one evening and asked to join the group, and he said I could start that night."

The running shoes duly went on and Ellington has never looked back, unless it was to see just how far behind the competition was. Cue a training montage and he was the under-15 national indoor champion within six months, going on to become the under-17 national outdoor champion, the English schools champion in his first year as a junior, as well as representing England in the European and World championships.

Not that it wasn't challenging to begin with. "I'd never trained before so it was a shock to the system, I felt like throwing up and stuff," he recalls, "but John kept telling me this is what you need to do, you've got the talent and if you train we can take your running further."

CHANGING TRACKS

After the initial success, the road wasn't always smooth. As he entered his 20s, Ellington felt the need for a change and left Powell for a different trainer. "I let other people influence me a bit, and it wasn't for the best," he admits. Injuries started to creep in and his form dipped. "I wasn't 🤔"

running as fast; it was a bit too much. I realised I'd done the wrong thing so I went back to him and as soon as I did, things started improving!"

You need self-confidence and probably a dash of stubbornness to make it as a professional athlete, but while Ellington has the belief to recognise his ability, he didn't allow pride-induced blindness to lead him the wrong way. He made the tough decision to return to Powell. "It was a big deal to go back. But every athlete who ever left John has never run fast again. They think the grass is greener but then they get injured, or you never see them again.

"When I left it was nothing personal, it was like a business decision and I thought I was doing the right thing for me. But I realised it wasn't working and I didn't have too



much pride to go back. And we're on the right path now."

With the winning team back together, the pair focused on rebuilding an athlete who was "in pieces". It worked, and according to Ellington last season "couldn't really have gone better". He's secured a sponsor (see box out), has help from UK athletics, and now believes the world is his oyster.

And what about that rebuilding process? Did it involve lots of Rocky-style early mornings necking raw eggs and dragging tyres while a curmudgeonly old man bellowed at

him? Again there's that rumbling laugh. "He's known me for over ten years now so he knows what to do with me in terms of training. Every athlete is different and a coach needs to know their athlete, know how they respond to different kinds of training."

WE CAN REBUILD HIM

While Rocky Balboa might need battering into shape, Ellington explains that sprinters require more delicate fine-tuning. You don't take a hammer to a Formula One car or make your racehorse drag a cart around, after all. "You need to load your training carefully throughout the week, leave in enough recovery time," he says.

I DIDN'T WANT TO GET A TATTOO I COULDN'T EXPLAIN, NOT SOMETHING FOR THE SAKE OF IT

In practical terms, if we can go a bit Men's Health for a moment, that means a mix of heavy weight sessions, cardio in the gym, core stability work, circuit training and work on the track. Ellington trains six days a week; this isn't his job, it's his entire life. "It's hard even though I enjoy it, definitely! My friends who box or play football are like 'it's easy, you just get down the track and run', but it's not easy, it's a whole body discipline. It's amazing all the things that are involved in making you run fast."

The end goal for all this work – and the reason we sat up to pay attention when we did – is to make it into the ultimate sports day... the London 2012 Olympics. While some members of the team qualify automatically due to points earned over various events, others, like Ellington, take part in national trials in June and must get sufficiently fast times and finish in the top two in their event to qualify. He's already got the required qualifying times for the relay team (who he helped to gold in last year's European Team Championships) and 200m, so now he just needs to come top two in the trials, as he puts it. He mentions this as if he's planning a walk to the shops; is he pretty confident? Another slow laugh. "Yeah."

INK AND THE ATHLETE

All being well, when he lines up on the starting grid you'll be able to pick him out not just by the Union Jack on his vest, but by the heavily inked arms and chest accompanying it. His first tattoo tale will be familiar to many: 18-year-old lad accompanies his mates to the studio to get their first ink and ends up getting something himself. "I thought 'I want one', and I wanted something I wouldn't regret so I chose my sister's name in a scroll on my right arm."

But if we don't know what it feels like to run the 100m in the time it takes to tie a shoelace, we'll probably all know the feeling that arose a year later when he realised "it looked a bit lonely and I needed to get something around it." He went back and bigger, welcoming a large Chinese dragon to his arm that represented how he looks

KING OF SPONSORSHIP

Ellington previously hit the headlines when injuries prevented him seeking sponsorship, so he came up with the novel idea of trying to secure funding by putting himself on eBay. "We did a brainstorming session with a friend in PR and I just said 'oh, I might as well just put myself on eBay.'" The off-hand comment was a lightbulb moment.

"I put myself up and it went really well, I got lots of press and TV coverage," he recalls. Alas, the winning bid turned out to be a hoax, "but I wasn't disappointed because I knew I'd got the coverage to help me out."

Sure enough, the exposure did the trick and attracted the attention of King of Shaves CEO, Will King, who messaged Ellington on Twitter at the start of the campaign. "He said if I had any problems, to get in touch – so I did and he stuck to his word, stepped in and sponsored me." With funding in place he could continue training. Without it, things would have been very different. "People underestimate how important funding is. You have to have it to train full-time as a professional athlete. Now I've got the sponsorship it's a weight off my shoulders."



after his sister. After that his mind was up and running with ideas for new pieces.

However, it meant a change of artist. "The first guy was good for the basics, but he wouldn't have worked for other stuff," says Ellington, who hunted around for the right person for the job until he saw a sleeve he liked on a man in the gym. On asking



he discovered the work of Aaron at Crawley's Inktrusion, and just like his coach back in the day, he'd found his man.

The partnership began with a Valkyrie on horseback. Ellington says he dismissed the idea of a sleeve to begin with, but chuckles at the recollection. "Sure enough I went back and got a pyramid with an all seeing eye, a Sphinx of wisdom, a revolutionary fist, a red star that says 'victory loves preparation' inside it, skulls, and now my whole left arm is covered."

He took his time over the sleeve, because his tattoos are more than a whim. "I didn't want to get a tattoo I couldn't explain, not something for the sake of it. It's important to me that it means something." 🌻

Does getting ink need extra thought if your body is a carefully balanced running machine? Apparently, it does. He's alright under the needle, but Ellington likes to plan his sessions carefully around his training. "After a long four-hour session I feel a bit flu-ey, a bit smashed to pieces. Your central nervous system is a bit run down – so I make sure not to get inked up when I've got an important training session coming up."

STARS OF TRACK AND FIELD

Sportsmen and women often have ink, and for a variety of reasons. Not for him the 'bleeding undead tribal skulls as intimidation' approach beloved of many fighters, though. "It's not about intimidation. For me they represent what I'm doing and what I'm about. If you get a tattoo for display purposes or to intimidate someone else, there's going to come a time in your life when it

doesn't mean anything and you start regretting it."

Regret seems to be something that James Ellington scrupulously avoids. Whether that's dodging a nine-to-five life or turning his back on pride to rejoin his original trainer, he's all about finding what works for him and sticking with it. No regrets. "It's best to stick with what works for you on and off the track," he says.

Off the track he gets involved with his local community, where he's spent



time coaching and mentoring young people to inspire them "to do what they want to do". He wants to nudge all of us to be a little more active, too. "The gym's not for everyone, but every little helps, going out for a walk or running around the park. At the end of the day being sat on your bum won't be good for you or your tattoos. Tattoos look better on people who are in shape!" Ellington himself is currently in great shape for the summer.

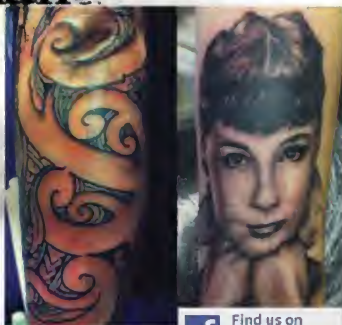
As for his next bit of ink... we'll have to see what the games bring. "My next tattoo will depend on what happens in the Olympics," he says. "How I perform will have a strong influence on what I have next." Whatever the outcome though, he'll remain philosophical – all he needs to do is glance down at the words etched into his right forearm. "It reads 'after the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box'," he explains before heading back to the gym to continue his preparations. "I really like that." 🐘

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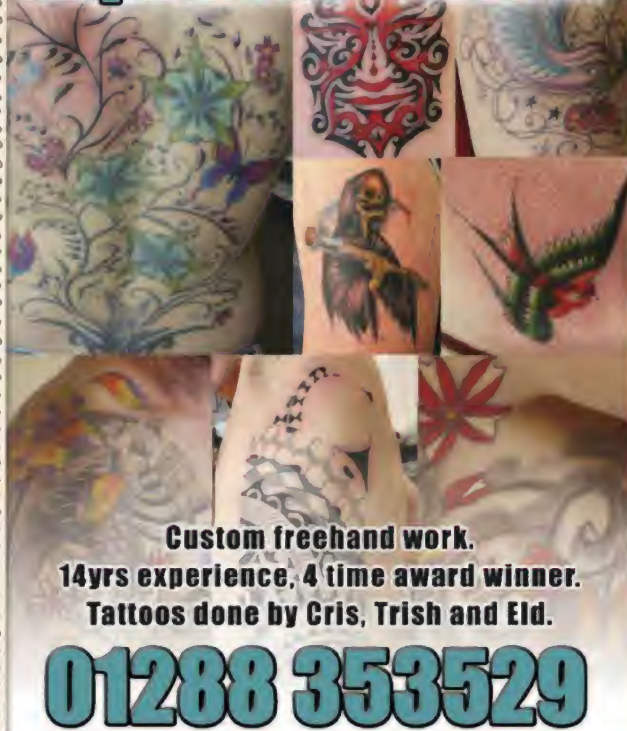
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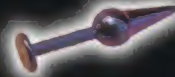
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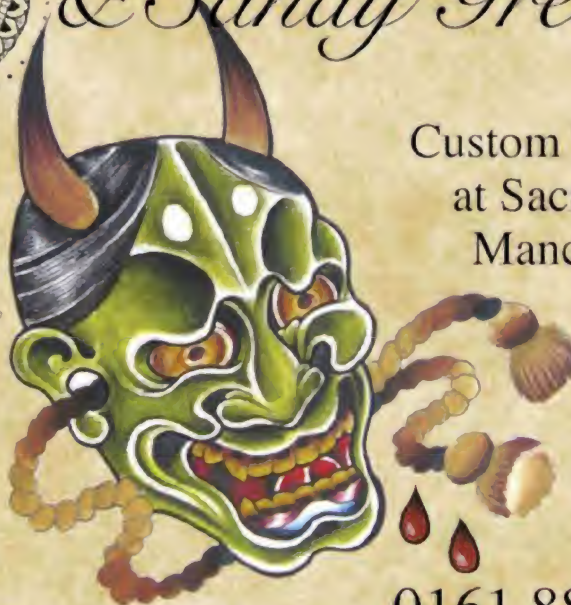


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the BUG LADY

www.projectinsect.com

Jessa Huebing-Reitinger was born in Wisconsin in 1971. At the age of nine, she moved to Florida and began painting using soft pastels. Two years later and she had sold her first commission and become a professional artist. Not bad going for a 12-year-old!

Ten years later and Jessa had graduated from Kansas City Art Institute with a B.F.A. degree in Painting, and five years after that, she had opened her own fine art studio in Kansas City, dubbed the Custom Canvas. A few years later and Jessa had completed large commissioned works for Fortune 500 companies, such as John Deere and General Electric. In 2003, Project InSECT art and performances were founded and Jessa began painting the world's largest scientific illustrations on canvas before a live audience daily. Within five years, the Project InSECT exhibition

and live performances had toured 17 museums, zoos and botanic gardens within the USA.

But if you think this is a career history that most people would be happy to achieve in a lifetime, in 2010 Jessa decided that it was time and another element to her CV and began a tattoo apprenticeship. Outstanding technical and creative abilities aside, how does someone manage to pack in so many achievements into so little



time? Surely there is something more than Jessa's obvious talent that is pushing her onwards and upwards. But strangely enough, it doesn't start with a love of art, in fact, quite the opposite. "I loathed painting for the first 20 years of my life and didn't find my love for

I AM AS STUBBORN AS A MULE, AS THE SAYING GOES, AND HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ONE TO SWIM UPSTREAM



it until senior year at the Kansas City Art Institute. I am as stubborn as a mule, as the saying goes, and have always been one to swim upstream. Before graduating art school, I was hell bent on representing myself, and not go through regular means to promote my work, via art publishers, galleries, or prestigious art competitions. This

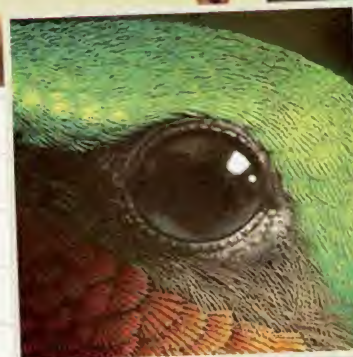


THE MOST VALUABLE THING I'VE LEARNED IN MY CREATIVE LIFE IS THERE ARE FAR MORE OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSPECTIVES 'OUTSIDE THE BOX' THAN THERE ARE WITHIN IT

has made life difficult at times and I've had to reinvent myself as an artist many times over. However, because of this, I pushed myself in exciting new mediums, subjects and ways in which the art is created which exceeds the boring repetition I would have been stuck in otherwise. The most valuable

thing I've learned in my creative life is there are far more opportunities and perspectives 'outside the box' than there are within it."

Maybe this is a good lesson for all of us, to kick out against the established methods and mediums of getting our work out there. We seem to have been



brainwashed that the only way to succeed is to 'play the game' and get with a big gallery or a big publishing house. So to see Jessa successfully go against the grain is not only a pleasure 🌻





in itself, but also shows what can be achieve with a little rethinking and dogged determination.

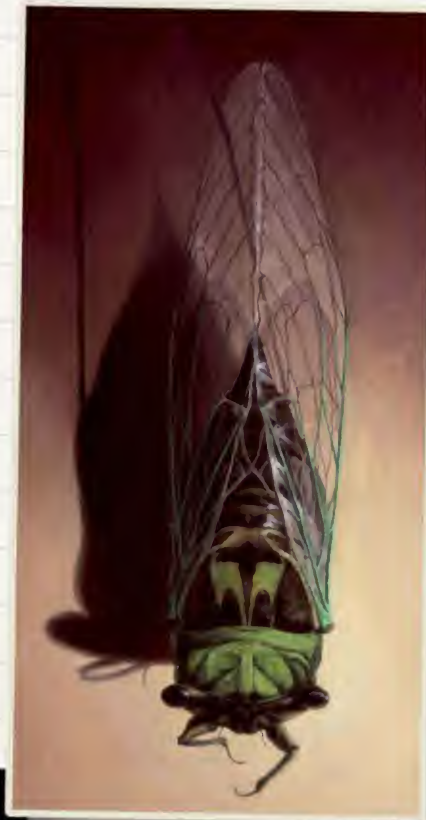
Jessa is also quick to point out that her husband, James, has been instrumental in helping her achieve her dreams. Not only was it his idea to paint insects, he helped Jessa come up with the idea of Project InSECT and became her business partner.

EARLY ON IN THE BEGINNING, WE HAD NO FUNDING, GRANTS, OR EXTRA MONEY TO GET THIS THING OFF THE GROUND, SO WE SOLD EVERYTHING WE OWNED AND FOR A SHORT TIME, WERE HOMELESS, LIVING OUT OF OUR CAR

"James and I have been together for over ten years. He has changed my life in so many ways; on the surface he is my muse and has spoiled me rotten. Behind the scenes, he is my source for new ideas and catalyst for the last ten years of my creative endeavours. He challenges me daily to be a better artist and human being, and I couldn't have asked for a better partner and best friend.

"We dreamt up Project InSECT sitting on an old beat up sofa in my basement studio. Then we went out and did it together. Early on in the beginning, we had no funding, grants, or extra money to get this thing off the ground, so we sold everything we owned and for a short time we were homeless, living out of our car. We finally secured a 20-year-old RV to live in and transport the exhibition all around the country.

"I traded a small original painting for the RV, and yes, we 🍌







and mirrored in my art and reflect outward to inspire others to learn something new about themselves.

"The science part comes in when Project InSECT took on a life of its own. Days off were spent bug hunting in the woods and working days filled with looking through a microscope to paint the large insect portraits. It gave me a child-like sense of adventure and discovery everyday, which most would give their right arm for to have in their professional careers.

"I would describe Project InSECT as an experimentation of confronting others prejudices and fears by subject matter and challenging the status quo of the fine art industry, by how the work is created in an educational

I AM A NATURE AND SCIENCE JUNKIE TO THE CORE

lived in that RV for six years, but we miss it very much now."

For the first two years of Project InSECT, James did thousands of hand-painted bug tattoos on



children to help put food on the table and pay the bills. This all seems a lot of good old fashioned head-to-the-grindstone work, so it begs the question, why bugs?

"I am a nature and science junkie to the core. My art has always been about nature in some way, shape, or form. I am inspired deeply by the uniqueness of each leaf, insect, or yes, even a rock. If you take the time to look close enough and observe any subject, person, or work of art, the individual characteristics begin to show themselves. Observation is a science in and of itself; it is the base measurement for science as a whole. So in essence, all the elements of life that inspire me personally are observed

public format. Most of the time, the large-scale paintings were created live on stage in front of thousands of people. For me, it was more than exhilarating; it was like winning the lottery everyday! And for the public, the majority of them felt like they discovered a new universe for the first time, looking through a magnificent telescope to see the stars as they never had before."

And don't think for one second that Jessa's art has just been... well, art. In 2005, Project InSECT helped a small beetle in Nebraska attain Federal Endangered Status. On top of these small victories, none of the Project InSECT paintings that have been created as a live performance were ever sold. They have all remained together



than in my many years in the fine art industry. I am fortunate and excited to be here at this particular time when the tattoo industry is quickening towards the fine arts in combination with the skin medium. I believe that tattooing has already had a huge impact on my painting, the way in which I view the process and flow of a work as on my painting, had a huge impact on my tattooing in the first year. I prefer to do large custom work, unless it is a realistic insect, arachnid, or arthropod... then I don't care how small it is."

And that is this amazing woman in a nutshell... or in Jessa's case, an exoskeleton. Do things your way, don't be scared to take a risk and most of all, never give up on a dream, even if it means living in an oversized car for six years. Nothing worth having is ever an easy journey.

"I not only dream big, but LOVE big... the bigger the better I say. It's all in the details. The larger it is, the more details

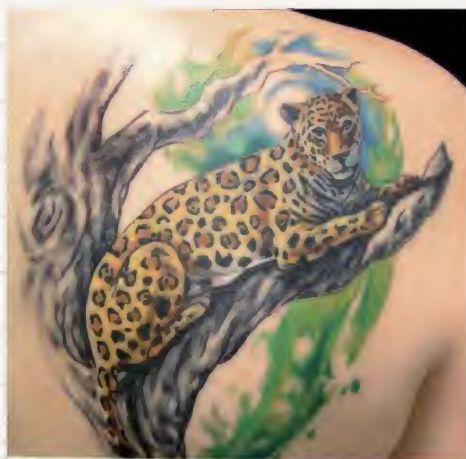
as a collection for exhibitions, though a couple of them were gifted to the venues that hosted Jessa's exhibition and performances. But for all this success, Jessa states: "Despite being interviewed on numerous occasions, no American art critic has ever published a critique or review of my paintings, my process, or the exhibition."

It doesn't seem logical or fair and one has to wonder if this is because Jessa is a tattooist as well. Is the 'art world' still viewing tattooing as a fashion rather than an artform in itself? If Jessa had stuck solely with painting, would she have been shown the recognition she deserved? Either way, it hasn't affected her drive and determination. It is just another challenge for her to overcome, and another arena to find more like-minded artists.

"Once again, James helped me with this new endeavour. He suggested I learn to tattoo and also helped me find my mentor, 'Johnny Jinx', who turned out to be the best mentor I could have ever had.

"Transitioning to the art of tattooing was an exciting new challenge and yet another re-invention. Like any new journey, it has been one of great challenge and great reward. I have discovered more amazing, skilled, and productive artists in the tattoo industry

I HAVE DISCOVERED MORE AMAZING, SKILLED, AND PRODUCTIVE ARTISTS IN THE TATTOO INDUSTRY THAN IN MY MANY YEARS IN THE FINE ART INDUSTRY



I can express. One day, in the near future, my eyes will give out on me and then my work will naturally get looser and more playful, because I'll be blind as a bat. But until then, I'm determined to make the most perceptual impact possible and inspire other artists to go 'big' as well." 🦋

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TOYS IN

THE ATTIC

In every city, around every corner, talented folks with interesting tattoos and compelling stories to accompany them are just waiting to be pestered by Skin Deep staffers. Designer toy revolutionary Frank Kozik is no exception



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Born in Madrid, Spain, but calling the United States home since the age of 14, Kozik is credited with reviving the lost art of concert posters – he's worked with the likes of Pearl Jam, Neil Young and Sonic Youth – as well as with being a driving force behind the explosive designer toy movement, which started in the '90s. Big achievements for a completely self-taught artist.

"I can remember being maybe five and spending a lot of time copying maps with coloured pencils out of an atlas. I drew a lot of typical kid stuff, ships, airplanes, animals and so on, then went on to try and copy stuff by graphic novel artists like Moebius in the '60s and '70s. Once punk hit in like '79 I got into doing crude collage work and that was pretty much the start of my 'career'."

Although Kozik left the music

business and his gig as poster designer and manager of his own record label, Man's Ruin Records, in 2001 – "I had been in that world for a good 20 years and was kinda tired of it; rock art is a ghetto of sorts" – it was a successful concert poster that solidified his desire to turn his artistic skills into a full-time profession.



KOZIK ON CANVAS

I get all sorts of urges, and since the fine art work actually carries the least amount of risk, financial or critical, I feel free to use that medium just to fuck around and do whatever weird thing I might feel like trying. Not my main field of endeavour though, I'm a horrible painter, but it's fun once in a while. And, oddly enough, all the paintings have sold. About 100 by now I think.

"Around 1987, I won Poster of the Year in a local newspaper for a Butthole Surfers poster I had for a local venue and I figured this had to be good for something – I was driving a truck for a living at the time. So on the strength of that recognition, I lied my way into a production art job at a local print shop, even though I knew nothing. I learned pretty quick on the job and after about a year I went full-time independent. Been doing it ever since."

YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO ADAPT AND GO WITH THE FLOW, BUT STILL DO ODD THINGS AT THE SAME TIME. IT'S DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN RATIONALLY, I SORT OF DON'T THINK ABOUT IT TOO MUCH AND TEND TO GO WITH MY FIRST FEELINGS

IT'S A TOY'S WORLD

Since jumping into the designer toy world, Kozik has created some of the most sought-after characters, including the Smorkin' Labbit, and is also infamous for his busts, such as Dead Che.

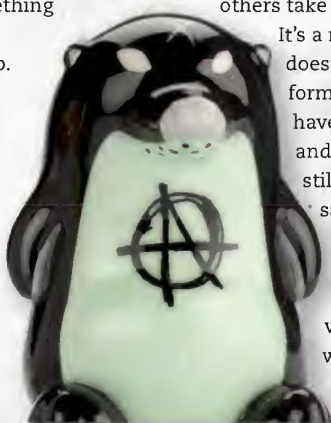
Oftentimes collaborating with Kidrobot, one of the world's biggest toy producers and retailers, Kozik also maintains his own company, Ultraviolence, for the stranger things up his sleeve.

"Often, it's not economically realistic for a large company to take a chance on an expensive and unproven large-sized weird 'art piece', so I do the Ultraviolence 🍌"



releases on my own since the risk for me is minimal. This way the toy companies can concentrate on proven types of items and I can still experiment."

As for his relationship with Kidrobot, Kozik started out as a fan and, being asked to be a collaborator, was glad to accept, following an inkling that something special was bubbling up.



ZERO TOLERANCE IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT! THE STUDIO IS, OF COURSE, HIP-DEEP IN LABBITS AND TOYS OF ALL SORTS. BIT OF A NIGHTMARE, ACTUALLY

"When Kidrobot first set up their online shop, I started buying stuff from them. After a few orders, their founder Paul Budnitz called me and asked if I was the same person who had done the toy releases in Japan and he asked if I would work with them. I was ready and it really worked out well. That was about nine years ago.

"As far as it being a 'movement', I had a gut feeling. I really liked the first ones I saw and figured it just had to be. Apparently, quite a few people ended up feeling the same way. Also, who doesn't like a toy? It's a good excuse for an adult to play with toys. I mean, 'art'."

But if you think there's a secret to churning out one iconic piece after another, you're wrong.

"Some happen easily and do well, others take years and maybe don't.

It's a mixed bag and there doesn't seem to be any formula for success. You have to be willing to adapt and go with the flow, but still do odd things at the same time. It's difficult to explain rationally, I sort of don't think about it too much and tend to go with my first feelings. It's worked out well, I seem to have some success in the field."

THE SMORKIN' LABBITS ARE COMING

Perhaps one of Kozik's most beloved and iconic characters is the Smorkin' Labbit whose existence, it just so turns out, was a bit of a lucky fluke. But aren't all great things?

"Literally drawn on a beer coaster in a bar in Japan. I had been over there quite a bit doing weird artsy stuff and had developed quite a Hello Kitty obsession; this was around 1996. My Japanese friends did not understand. To them the Kitty stuff was trash, so they said I should do my own version, hence Labbit. He smokes, drinks, fucks... he's not a real nice character. The misspelling was a happy accident. It was supposed to be Smokin' Rabbit, but on the first production toy, the Japanese firm had mislabelled the boxes Smorkin' Labbit and it was just too genius not to steal and rename the character as that."

With new limited edition versions coming out regularly, including the most recent Bondage Labbit, the damn things have been taking over my home for years, which is precisely why Kozik doesn't let them set foot in his house.

"Zero tolerance in the home environment! The studio is, of course, hip-deep in Labbits and toys of all sorts. Bit of a nightmare, actually."

KOZIK INK

Although he hasn't had new ink in



years, Kozik's collection of tattoos is top-notch. Clocking in at over two dozen, he has come a long way since "a crappy heart with a knife through it in '76 or '77 from a tattoo and airbrushed T-shirt stall at a flea market by a dude called Spider Webb. \$15 I think it cost. Long covered up!"

However, every time the itch for something new came along, the process of settling on a specific design was anything but easy. "I would get the idea, then obsess and draw it a million times on paper and stand in front of



THE CHEST PIECE IS TWO EAGLES FIGHTING OVER A SACRED HEART; IT IS ABOUT THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR. I GREW UP IN SPAIN AND MY FAMILY WAS DIVIDED BY THE WAR, FIGHTING ON BOTH SIDES - IT WAS STILL A DAILY SUBJECT WHEN I WAS A KID IN THE '60S

the mirror and all that, so one second of inspiration, months of obsession, then the tattooing. I hate being tattooed, actually. The smell and noise make me feel ill. Doesn't seem to hurt

too much, but it's that smell!"

So what did Frank Kozik end up with after enduring all those smelly sessions? Here goes...

"The chest piece is two eagles

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL COLLABORATION

I was approached by some more 'edgy' art guys that were running the campaign for Cirque [and the Zumanity show]. It went smooth for me as I was isolated from the Cirque itself. I have seen a couple of different performances; I like the stagecraft of it. The intellectual content seems minimal.

fighting over a sacred heart; it is about the Spanish Civil War. I grew up in Spain and my family was divided by the war, fighting on both sides - it was still a daily subject when I was a kid in the '60s.

"The family was bitterly divided between hardcore fascists and hardcore communists, so this piece is sort of a tribute to that. One eagle holds the fascist symbols and a banner with the war slogan 'Todo Para La Patria', which





MIXING INFLUENCES

As a child I was exposed to a lot of classical art and learning, to European graphic comics of the late '60s and '70s, as well as real propaganda art since we lived under Franco. When I came to the US, I completely got into trash culture and exploitation art and I believe that some of my work blends the two.

means 'Everything for the Fatherland'. The other eagle holds the communist symbols and the banner 'No Pasaran', 'They Will Not Pass', which was the Republican slogan for the siege of Madrid where both my grandparents, who were communist officers, were captured and subsequently executed by fascist forces.

"On each wrist there is a black sparrow with a skull worked into its back. One has a banner with 'Mournful' and the other 'Remembrance'. I am a big Edgar Allen Poe fan and this is a tribute to him.

"On my inner forearms are very large traditional black panthers... they are wrapped in banners that read 'Empty Pleasures' and 'Desperate Measures', which is a slogan I came up with that represented my mindset back then.

"On the outside of my forearms is a pair of crude daggers that bear Masonic imagery, which I am somewhat fascinated with. One dagger says 'Eternal Vigilance' and the other 'Forever Renewed'. For me the symbols

A LOT OF MY STUFF IS FAIRLY FLASH-LOOKING AND WORKS OK AS TATS. A LOT OF TIMES WHEN PEOPLE SHOW ME A TAT OF MY WORK ON THEM, I TELL THEM THAT THIS MEANS THEIR SOUL WILL SERVÉ ME IN HELL. FREAKS SOME OF THEM OUT!

and placement of the daggers, as well as the slogans, represent awareness and protection from harm.

"Spider webs on each elbow are from my lifelong motorcycle thing, and on the inside of each elbow there is a large spider, vaguely Japanese looking, which is about my time in Japan.

"On each bicep there is a large serpent wrapped around an anchor. The snakes symbolize strength and the anchors perseverance. These two designs also contain a life and a death symbol. A skull and crossbones and a '13' on the left arm, the sinister side, and a 1920s-style sailor girl on the right with the word 'Pequod' on her hat, that

being the name of the ship in Moby Dick, which is



a favorite book of mine. The anchors also incorporate the American colours and stars and stripes in an archaic shield of Columbia form, representing my adoption and love of the USA as my home.

"They're all sort of anchored to a very large abstract tribal stripe that extends from one wrist, up my arm, across my shoulders and down to the other wrist. This was done in pieces and remains unfinished – laziness."

WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE?

Since the '80s, fans have been turning Kozik's designs into tattoos, no arm-twisting required.

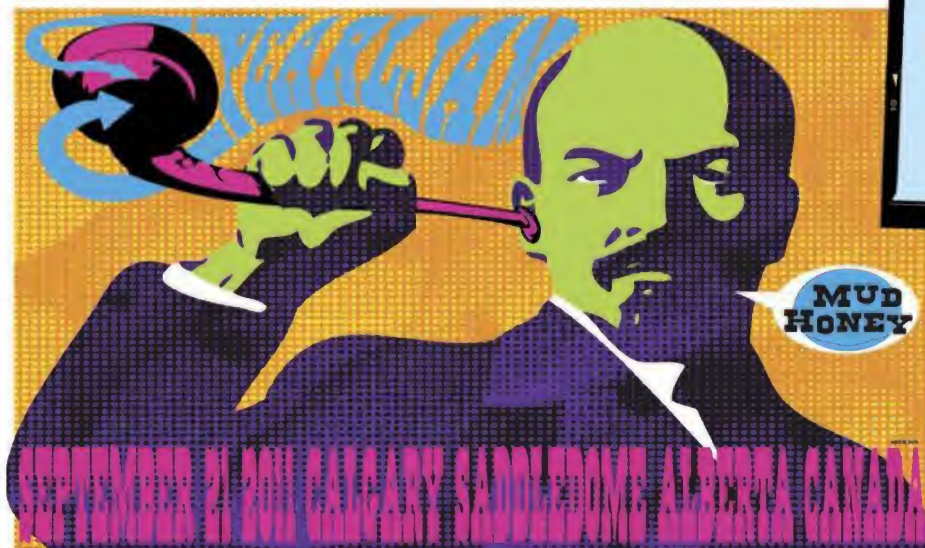
"Seems fine, a lot of my stuff is fairly flash-looking and works OK as tats. A lot of times when people show me a tat of my work on them, I tell them that this means their soul will serve me in hell. Freaks some of them out!"

One can only hope that flash will be the next thing to come out of Kozik's



studio and with "tons of vinyl and clothing, more limited art-type junk, posters, paintings, the usual" lined up for the future, it just might. But whatever the case, it's safe to say this is one artist who'll carry on designing stuff forever, always staying true to himself.

As he puts it, "Frank Kozik is an asshole who is obsessed with his car and his cats." 🐾



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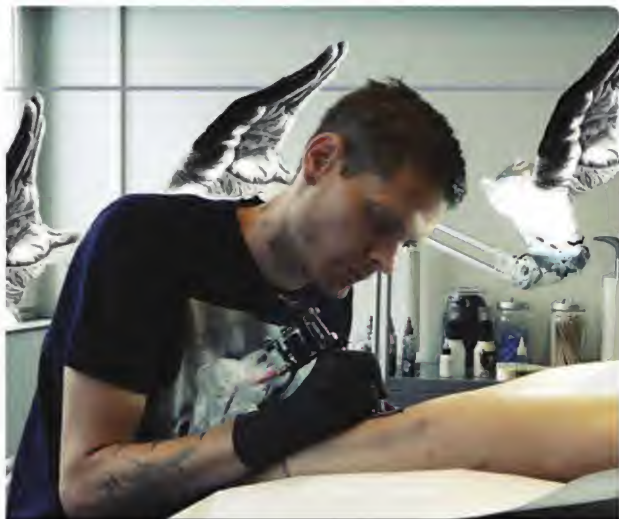


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THE REAL DEAL

A 'jail dude' inspired Lasse Sjöroos at Individual Ink in Turku, Finland, to build his own tattoo machine. His first tattoo was a horrible tribal star that looked more like a ninja star, but 16 years later he's one of Finland's best tattooists when it comes to portraits and realism

LASSE SJÖROOS STARTED TATTOOING BY ACCIDENT. AT THE AGE OF 18 HE GOT HIS FIRST TATTOO, A SURPRISINGLY GOOD ONE, ACCORDING TO HIMSELF, AND THAT WAS STEP ONE.

I got tattooed by an old jail dude who built his own machines out of electric razors, and it's actually an amazingly good tattoo. That guy was high as hell, God knows on what, but the tattoo is technically really well done and looks sharp and nice still today. About a year later I recalled his machine and built my own. I have always been drawing so it seemed like a good idea.

IF I PAINT IT WILL NOT BE ANYTHING NEAR TATTOO RELATED. IT WILL BE MORE OF A SURREALISTIC STYLE

THE FIRST TATTOO HE MADE ON SOMEONE ELSE WITH HIS RAZOR MACHINE, HOWEVER, HASN'T REALLY MADE IT INTO HIS PORTFOLIO, SO TO SPEAK.

One of my friends wanted a little tribal star on his wrist, but it ended up looking more like a ninja star. That was not my best tattoo. It was actually somewhat horrible.

NOWADAYS HE DOES MOST OF HIS OWN BODY WORK HIMSELF, OFTEN WITH THE SAME RESULT AS WITH HIS DEBUT PERFORMANCE.

They are really awful, but they remind me of different stages of my life and I like them. In recent years I've had a few nice tattoos done by different good artists, however. 🍷





And I've also talked to Jack Ribeiro and Robert Hernandez for like six years now, but it's hard to find the time to fly to Madrid and Luxembourg and I don't want to do it at a convention. That would be a waste of both their time and mine.

ABOUT TWO YEARS AFTER THE NINJA STAR INCIDENT, IN 1997, HE OPENED UP INDIVIDUAL INK IN TURKU, AS ONE OF ONLY TWO SHOPS IN THE CITY AT THE TIME.

I decided to open up a shop because all my friends and their friends who got tattooed in my home were telling me to. At that time there was only one shop in Turku, but of course things are not the same anymore. That was a small shop at the edge of the city centre. Today we are located in a big studio in the city centre and it's operated by my wife and me. We also have two other tattooists, David and Joel, and a body modification artist, Lari, working there.

SOMETIMES IT WOULD BE A RELIEF TO MAKE SOME OLD SCHOOL THING THAT WOULD BE READY IN ONE SHORT SESSION, THOUGH. IT CAN BE ANNOYING WHEN YOU HAVE TO DO STUFF OVER MANY SESSIONS

LASSE'S STYLE OF CHOICE IS REALISM; HIS TATTOOS OFTEN LOOK MORE LIKE PAINTINGS THAN TATTOOS, MAKING HIM FEEL MORE LIKE A CRAFTSMAN THAN AN ARTIST.

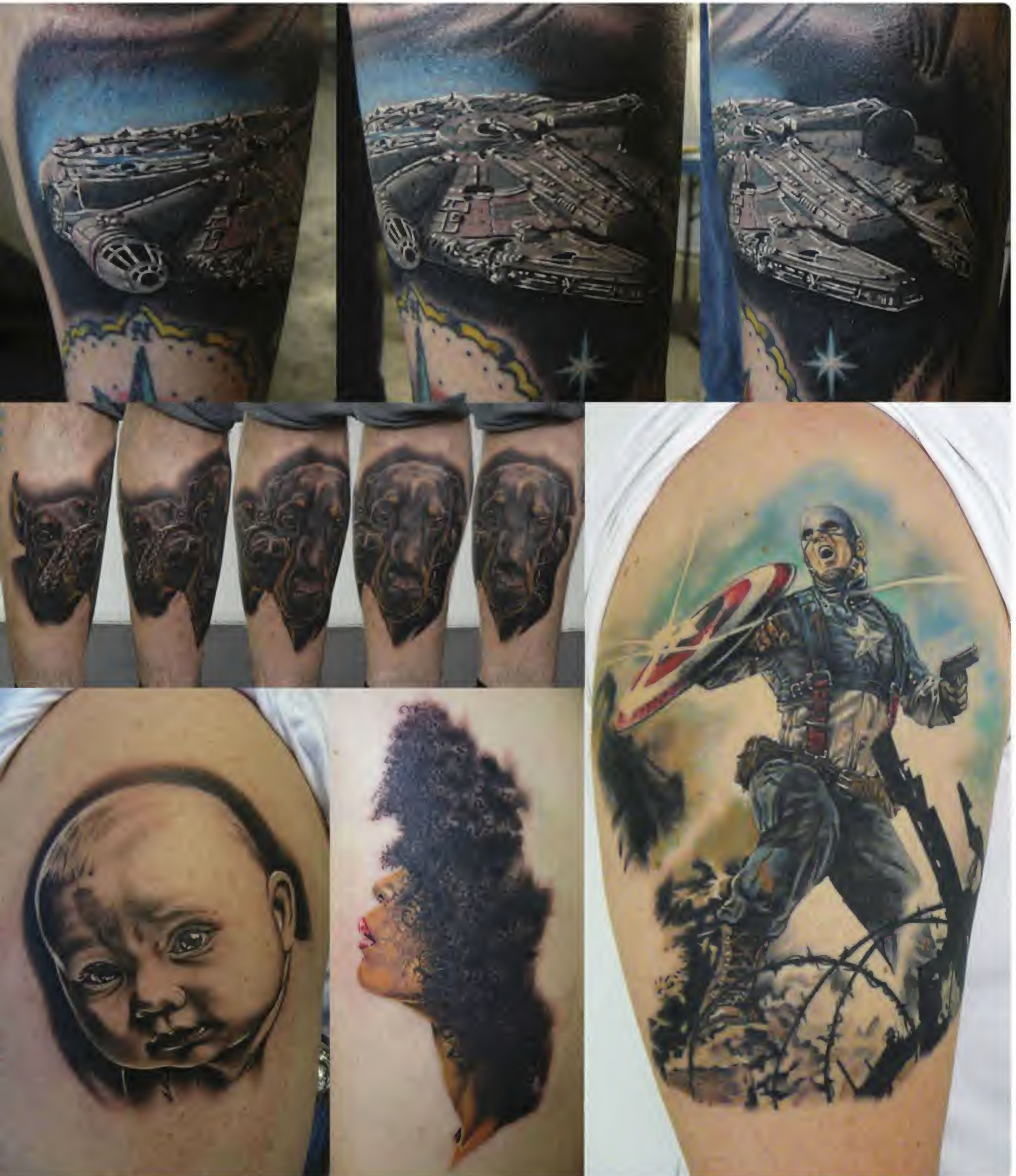
I do all kinds of work, but people have been asking me a lot for realistic stuff, portraits and animals and all that. It's OK as I like to do that style the most, but at the same time, when you have an opportunity and the freedom to be artistic, it feels great. Sometimes it would be a relief to make some old school thing that would be ready in one short session, though. It can be annoying when you have to do stuff over many sessions.

I try to draw my own stuff in my free time, but sometimes it's hard to find the time with working a lot and having a family too. I used to paint quite a lot before, but now I just don't find the time or inspiration. If I paint, it will not be anything near tattoo related. It will be more of a surrealistic style. I love surreal art; Dalí is my favorite. I also play guitar in a band we've had for 14 years.

LIKE THE REST OF THE WORLD, THE FINNISH TATTOO SCENE HAS GROWN OVER THE YEARS AND INDIVIDUAL INK TODAY IS ONE OF 14 STUDIOS IN TURKU.

It's sick since our town is so small, but it's happening everywhere. There hasn't really been a scene in Finland before. There are few really good tattooists here, but now it seems like we are starting to have some sort of scene, because of all the hype that's been around the tattoo industry over the last few years. Since I was in this town tattooing for years before the hype, it doesn't seem to me that there's anything special going on in Finland, though. There's a good convention every year and a lot of lot of new shops around everywhere. But again, that's a global phenomenon at the moment... 🐼





March 9-11, 2012

SYDNEY TATTOO & BODY ART EXPO

The 4th Sydney Tattoo and Body Art Expo were held on the weekend of March 9-11 at Olympic park, Sydney, Australia. The Expo was held over three amazingly packed days – something was happening on the main stage the whole time the show went on, everything from burlesque dancers to body suspension

This is Australia's largest tattoo expo of its kind. It's a must-attend international event that attracts artists from all around the world and has a huge and varied entertainment program over the course of the three days. Basically, it's loaded to keep you entertained from start to finish.

This year, Australia was well represented with over 315 highly talented tattooists and body piercers from all over the country. There were also more than 140 international artists who attended this year; among them were Nikko Hurtado, Horimasa Bunshin Saikan and Engelhard. With over 20 countries being represented this year, from Germany, France and the UK, to USA, Japan and Borneo, each year this event is getting larger



and more international, proving that the Sydney Tattoo & Body Art Expo will continue to grow and be able to bring more spectacular

THE ACT OF HANGING THE HUMAN BODY FROM HOOKS PIERCED THROUGH THE SKIN IS CERTAINLY SOMETHING YOU SHOULD SEE AT LEAST ONCE



Tracey Brodin Various

entertainment each and every year.

Among the tattooists, we found Horiso and Syodai from Soutebori Hadae Dojyo, Japan who were using a traditional tattooing style. The artists were sitting on a mat on the floor, using modern day steel needles tied to bamboo handles to tattoo. This stand was constantly surrounded with people; you could see they were amazed to see both of the artists still using traditional methods and many of them had never seen this style of tattooing in person before.

During the three days there were many different tattoo categories to show off your artwork. At the end of each day, was the Best Tattoo of the

THE CITY ITSELF

Sydney hosts many different festivals and some of Australia's largest social and cultural events. These include the Sydney Festival, Australia's largest arts festival which is a celebration involving both indoor and free outdoor performances throughout January; the Biennale of Sydney dedicated to international and Australian contemporary art; the Big Day Out, a travelling rock-music festival which originated in Sydney; the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras along Oxford Street; the Sydney Film Festival and many other smaller film festivals such as the short film Tropfest and Flickerfest. Sculpture by the Sea, Australia's largest outdoor sculpture exhibit, began at Bondi Beach in 1996.

Day (completed at the Expo) category for both male and female. This was very popular and gave the crowd an opportunity to see the quality of work done here. Other tattoo categories scattered through the three days included Small/ Medium, Best Bio-mechanical, Best Large, Best Portrait/ Realistic, Best Tribal/Celtic, Best Back, Best Sleeve, and Best Asian, with all tattoo categories being divided into colour, black and grey, male and female. There were some great tattoos on display and the competition was quite fierce; the judges had their work cut out for them that's for sure. It was also an excellent opportunity to get a good look at the quality of tattoo work that was worn by all the collectors of tattoos at the Expo.

If you wanted to see something completely different then you didn't want to miss the live body suspension show. These live performances were done by First Blood Sydney. Dan Lovett had hooks through both calves, thighs and forearms. Once he was lifted off





the bed, he was then hung upside-down in a suicide position. You could see that the onlooking audience were amazed by the performance they were watching. The act of hanging the human body from hooks pierced through the skin is certainly something you should see at least once. They certainly put on a crowd-pleasing show. Not only where the volunteers suspended from hooks, but they were then swung over the audience and spun around, showing just what the human body is capable of tolerating.

Dr Rev, the renowned blood painter, showcased his skills at the Expo by air-brushing with his own blood – for



IF YOU WANTED TO TAKE AN UNUSUAL PIECE OF ART HOME WITH YOU, DR REV'S BOOTH WAS CERTAINLY THE PLACE TO BE



his live demonstration, the airbrush was connected directly to his vein! If you wanted to take an unusual piece of art home with you, Dr Rev's booth was certainly the place to be. Of note here, Dr Rev has been busy lately raising awareness of the importance of donating blood. Let's enforce that here for him – if you're able to in-between tattoo sessions, get down to your local centre and give up a pint. You know it makes sense.

Australia's very own Penthouse Pet of the Year and tattooed model, Ashlee Adams, was the face of the Expo. Ashlee was on hand to pose for a photo or pick up a signed calendar. She was definitely a major crowd pleaser at the Expo. Meanwhile, Advanced Airbrush could be found busily showcasing their talents, airbrushing the bodies of some very beautiful ladies. You couldn't tell if the models were actually wearing clothes or not. Advanced Airbrush had a couple of vehicles on display they had airbrushed, including a T-Bucket Ford which had been painted using the theme, *True Blood*. The owner of this was Adam, whose wife was from Pretty In Ink, a tattoo studio from West Ryde.

A free daily seminar presented by Kian Forreal from Inner Vision Tattoo, proved to be very popular with Kian explaining the meaning behind certain tattoos. These seminars were always full with standing room only. Another seminar was Japanese Mythical Monsters presented by Crystal Gayle

from Gomineko Books, Japan.

You could see some amazing live art featuring the very talented Aussie urban art heroes, Houli, Dirt and Sprinkles. These guys are referred to as 'renaissance legends'; they had finished the artwork by Sunday and it was really something to behold, what with all the details they had been able to achieve using mainly spray cans.

Australasian Wrestling Federation was a huge attraction, putting on two amazing shows each day. You could feel the tension in the air when the wrestlers came together in the ring. And they didn't hold back as they put on some great wrestling throughout the three days – at one stage the blood started flowing freely from a cut to the head. Benny Cole was a real favourite, especially with the kids, and another great wrestler was TNT.

Overall, the event went off brilliantly. It was well organised, very professional and as an added bonus, there was plenty of parking at the Expo. Olympic Park is well situated close to motels in the area, and once you were there, you didn't have to leave with hot food available at a reasonable price. If you are planning on attending next year, the Expo will be moving to the Entertainment Precinct at Fox Studios, Moore Park. The confirmed dates March 8-10, 2013. The organisers are also holding the 1st Melbourne Tattoo and Body Art Expo which will take place on November, 9-11, 2012. 🐾

Classifieds

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Inwood Ink studio in Harlow, Essex, are looking for an experienced artist to work in a new, and up-coming shop. Must have a minimum of four years experience, although all portfolios will be reviewed. If you would like an interview or any more information, please contact Thaira on 07872 496538, or email your information and images to info@inwoodink.co.uk.

Tattooist required at Eclipse Body Art Newquay, will need minimum three years studio experience and be a good all-rounder, turn work round quickly, and work well with the team. Email lorraineridgers@macace.net for more details.

Skins & Needles: tattoo artist required for busy town centre location in Middlesbrough, Cleveland, located close to Teesside university. We are looking for somebody with studio experience, a strong portfolio, friendly personality and reliable, to replace one of our artists who is emigrating. No rock stars please. Applicants to email portfolio to thesalvins@live.com.

I'm opening a bigger studio of Krisp Ink just outside Wolverhampton and am looking to rent space to a tattooist. The space will be ready to start work by April, so please get in touch 07817 911734, krispoole20@yahoo.com.

Busy modern tattoo studio in Shropshire seeks second tattoo artist. Must be clean, alcohol and drug free with at least three years shop experience. Will be required to tattoo a variety of styles and design custom pieces, as well as of the wall stuff! Need to provide photographic examples of previous work and references will be sought. Please call 07790 047207 and leave details.

Tattoo Studio 81 Preston are looking for full-time artists to work in a busy, modern, well established tattoo studio. Four years (studio) tattooing experience and recent portfolio is a must. Interested? Please contact Studio 81 Preston on 01772 887577 or Studio81@live.co.uk.

Tattoo apprentice wanted: This person will have to be an amazing artist, which means you have to have the ability to draw free-hand and from trace. At interview you must bring with you, YOUR own original art. The ideal candidate will be hard-working, pay huge attention to detail, be reliable, honest, and most importantly, have an understanding of what you're letting yourself in for! I am looking for an extremely rare person who cannot only follow instruction to the letter, but work off their own initiative. If you are able to commit to all of the above, we will invest time, money and a wealth of experience into your apprenticeship, and welcome you to become part of a fantastic team. No time wasters please. Email me examples of your best work and a little about yourself: birminghamink@hotmail.co.uk; add us on Facebook at [birminghaminktattoo](https://www.facebook.com/birminghaminktattoo).

Tattoo artist wanted: Brighton's INKA TATTOOS are looking for a full-time tattoo artist. Applicants must have a minimum of three years studio experience, a positive attitude, a pleasant personality and a strong portfolio of custom work, which displays a very good understanding of all traditional styles in addition to demonstrating their own unique flair. No drug, alcohol or ego problems please! The position is permanent and available immediately. Please send a bit of info about yourself/CV and links to your portfolio to Marc at inkatattoosbrighton@yahoo.co.uk.

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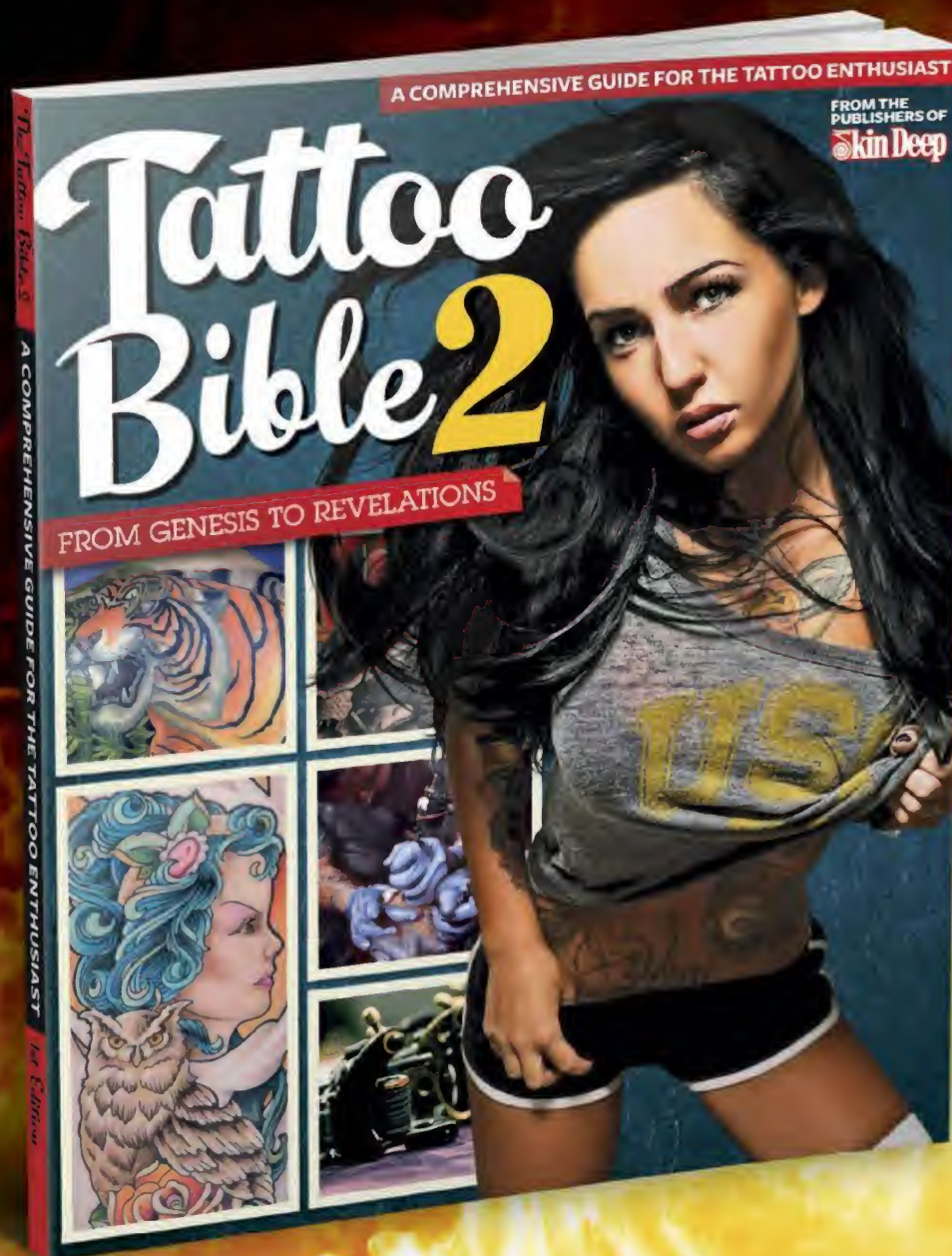
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When we published Volume One of *The Tattoo Bible*, tattooing was at a point of immense popularity. Who would have thought twelve months on that its popularity would grow into an even bigger global phenomenon? It is as much a part of popular culture today as our favourite TV shows, films and musicians. Along with that popularity comes a thirst for knowledge and a need for a respected source to answer those questions.

In this – *The Tattoo Bible 2* – we once again bring you the essential information you need to make good decisions when it comes to getting your first tattoo. You'll also find great advice from respected writers and tattoo artists. We look at everything you need to know if you're a tattoo virgin thinking about your first time, right across the board to how to get on the road to becoming a tattoo artist yourself and the right way to go about it.

We talk to respected international tattoo artists, look at the role the media has played in the sudden growth in popularity, arm you with a history of the art and discuss the different schools of tattooing. We look at the best in aftercare advice, give an overview of the international convention scene and how you can use it to your advantage and lift the lid on cover-ups. Of course - it wouldn't be a Skin Deep spin-off if we didn't lavish it with some outstanding photography and drop in a few of our best ever features to make this volume an even more collectible edition than the first.

Ultimately, *The Tattoo Bible 2* presents you with a fantastic worldview on the industry as it stands today. Just because we're having fun doesn't mean we're not taking it seriously!

From the publishers of

Skin Deep

An eye is upon you

DEFINE YOURSELF



Paula Hardy Kangelos

SCRATCHER:

A PERSON, ANIMAL, OR THING THAT SCRATCHES

Scratcher, a word that comes up frequently in tattoo circles – an ugly word, one that's used in an accusatory manner, designed to insult. A slang term to describe a person who tattoos outside of official local authority jurisdiction, perhaps from home, without guidance, in potentially unsanitary conditions. But why that word? What's its definition and why is it relevant?

Scratch: a thin, shallow cut made with a sharp instrument. Relieving an itch or clawing/ scraping at the skin.

A slight wound.

Clawing, cutting, scraping at the skin

– a painful, even violent, assault. Actions you'd not wish

to be associated with tattoo art or modern tattoo practise.

To write or draw hurriedly. A hasty scribble. Something done haphazardly or by chance. Something assembled hastily or at random.

Would you want to be used as a random sketchbook? A haphazard scratchpad? Should tattoos be executed hurriedly or with haste?

One of the inescapable elements of tattooing is time. Tattoos take time to make, we must 'sit' for the necessary duration in order to possess them. We even measure and quantify the volume of our tattoos by counting the hours it took to obtain them. Good tattoos cannot be describe as 'hasty scribbles', instead, tattoos should be precise, laboured, exact. It takes years to develop the skills required to tattoo and they cannot be approximated with luck. The tattoo process should never be haphazard.

A contestant who has been removed

or has withdrawn from the competition.

To not seek a proper apprenticeship or at the very least, guidance from an experienced tattooer is to withdraw from tattoo society. To tattoo from home is to separate yourself from the wider tattoo community. Yes, It's hard to get an apprenticeship, not many are offered and there are many talented artists out there competing for these few opportunities. Still, withdrawing from the contest isn't the answer. If you remove yourself from the competition to tattoo at home, you are not just letting down your potential tattooees, but also yourself. The only way to succeed in a competitive environment is to be the very best you can be, that is, work at your art.

YES, IT'S HARD TO GET AN APPRENTICESHIP. NOT MANY ARE OFFERED AND THERE ARE MANY TALENTED ARTISTS OUT THERE COMPETING BUT WITHDRAWING FROM THE CONTEST ISN'T THE ANSWER

Start from scratch – to begin at the very beginning, with nothing. But if you apprentice under a skilled tattooer, you don't start at the very bottom, from 'scratch', but instead, an apprenticeship provides a foundation, with your baby steps supported and your falls and failures cushioned by your mentor's experience. By accepting your need for supervision, you can ensure that your inevitable mistakes are never disasters.

Scratch the surface – to treat with superficiality. If you love tattoos and tattooing enough to make it your life, your love and your job, don't disrespect it with a superficial involvement. Invest in it, dedicate to it, don't buy a cheap 'kit' from the Internet and declare yourself a tattooist. The wounds made by the tattoo process may only be skin deep, but your devotion must be far greater.

To strike out or to cancel, to negate.

If you profess to love tattooing,

don't negate it as an artistic practice by making substandard tattoos in your kitchen.

If your response to these points is 'but many great tattooists started tattooing from home', you'd be right, they have. Unfortunately though, the vast majority of those that attempt to start tattooing in this unorthodox fashion will not become great tattooers. They won't become tattooers at all, instead they'll labelled with that ugly word, scratcher.

So what's the difference between a scratcher and someone that started tattooing from home and went on to be a respected tattooer? Artistic talent is an obvious requirement, as is determination, but perhaps the

most important element of all is attitude. Do you think you have a right to tattoo, just because

you fancy it? Because other people do? Because "it can't be that hard"? Or are you up all night reading about pathogens and drawing all day? Do you save all spare cash to get tattooed, in the off-chance you might be given a few tips while in the chair? Or even better, are you getting tattooed hoping your favourite artist might notice you and consider taking you on as an apprentice? Are you desperate to get into the right environment and be part of tattoo society proper?

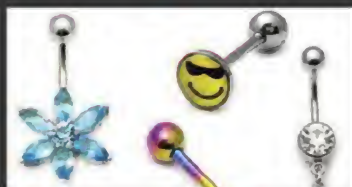
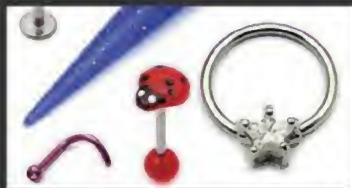
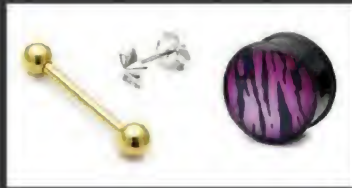
As a tattooist, it's your responsibility to ensure you are 'up to scratch' as both an artist and a crafts-person, to keep a clean and sterile environment and to learn, grow and improve continuously. And as a tattooed person, it is your responsibility to research and to consider, to respect yourself and your body, ensuring you don't receive a substandard tattoo in an unsanitary environment.

Don't be chicken feed. 🐔



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